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Maria, Monomachos and the Mangana: Imperial Legitimacy (1042-1046)

Ewan Short

Maria Skleraina was recognised as a figure of political significance in Byzantine society during the fourth and fifth decades of the eleventh century.¹ Her entrance into the imperial family through a *ménage à trois* with the emperor Constantine IX Monomachos and his legitimate wife Zoe was still remembered at the turn of the twelfth century. The notoriety of Skleraina's relationship with Monomachos is often mentioned in modern scholarship, but publications by Nicolas Oikonomides and Maria Dora Spadaro remain the only focused studies of her unusual history.²

Oikonomides noticed that Skleraina was closely associated with the Mangana area, on the east slope of the first hill of Constantinople, after she returned to the city with Monomachos in 1042 (fig. 1). He thought this connection was established for mainly economic reasons, with rev-

¹ Research on this article was conducted with the support of the South West and Wales Doctoral Training Program and the Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul between January and April 2020. I am also especially grateful to Ingela Nilsson, Olof Heilo, David Hendrix and Shaun Tougher for their advice, and to my partner Emma Huig for her photographs. All mistakes are my own. Unfortunately, the photograph of the sea-view of the Mangana published here is obscured, but we were not able to return because of the outbreak of Covid-19.

² In 1980/81 Oikonomides demonstrated Skleraina's possession of DO seal BZS.1958.106.39. He argued the seal is pre-Kommenian, and also cannot have belonged to the unnamed Alan mistress taken by Monomachos in c. 1050, the only woman other than Maria attested as *sebastē* in this period: Oikonomides, 1980/81, 239-246. Spadaro published a critical edition of the long poem attributed to Psellos titled 'Verses at the tomb of the *sebastē*. Here she suggested that Skleraina developed her own political strategies to establish herself within the Byzantine ruling class: Spadaro 1984, and Westerink 1992, 239-252.

enue from the Mangana giving Skleraina the financial independence to enact patronage and gift giving. This understanding of Skleraina's connection with the Mangana has subsequently been widely accepted by modern scholars. Skleraina seems however to have already been substantially wealthy before 1042, suggesting that her connections to the Mangana may have been established for other reasons. In this article I aim to reassess Skleraina's links to the Mangana by highlighting written, material, and topographic evidence that her involvement with the site extended beyond a purely economic arrangement. I aim to show that Skleraina's connections to the site were designed to substantiate her contested imperial status and legitimise her relationship with Monomachos. I argue these links involved her management of the charitable activities at the Mangana, as well as her direction of the building work. The significance of the site as a symbol for Monomachos' reign was recognised by his contemporaries and has been highlighted in modern studies.³ Here I will also suggest that between 1042 and 1046 the built and landscaped environment at the Mangana symbolised Skleraina's status and her relationship with Monomachos.

Skleraina and Monomachos' connection with this site is an important case study shedding light on how specific foundations could be used for the public presentation of imperial persons. Previous studies have emphasised that imperial Byzantine women and men used patronage to pattern their lives on the models of earlier rulers.⁴ It has been suggested that the prestige acquired through monumental construction was particularly important for women, because they had access to fewer visible roles in Byzantine state and society.⁵ However, in this article I

³ Psellos, *Chronographia* (ed. Reinsch), 524-526, Attaleiates, *History* (ed. Pérez), 36.11-20, and Skylitzes, *Synopsis* (ed. Thurn), 476.9-14, all describe Monomachos as the founder of the site and discuss it as a significant aspect of his reign. For the links between the Monomachoi and St George: Nesbitt & Oikonomides 1996, 59; Cheynet 2002. For the Mangana as a symbol of Monomachos' rule: Lemerle 1977, 275-276; Spingou 2015, 61-65. For the poetry written to celebrate Monomachos' connections with the Mangana: Bernard 2018, 219-220.

⁴ Klein 2014, 85; Brubaker 2004, 52-75; James 2001, 12, 14, 148-151; Harries 1994, 34-44; Whitby 1994, 83-94.

⁵ Demirtiken 2019, 175; James 2014, 65.

would like to focus more on the significance of Skleraina and Monomachos' roles as joint patrons of the Mangana, whilst also acknowledging that the developments at the site presented Skleraina as pious and charitable.⁶

This article is influenced by Diliانا Angelova's study of the presentation of imperial power through depictions of women and men as partners between the first and sixth centuries in the Roman and Byzantine Empires.⁷ Angelova has proposed that evidence for such collaboration can be found by prioritising material evidence and recognising the potential distortions of texts. She argues this method is appropriate because women's contributions to imperial partnerships are frequently overlooked in literary sources, where the narratives are often focalised upon the emperor.⁸ Recently, Elif Demirtiken has also suggested that a 'Komnenian turn' rendered imperial women in the 'theatre-state' of twelfth-century Byzantium increasingly visible as joint patrons.⁹ Skleraina and Monomachos' links to the Mangana, which emerge through a range of source material, show that also in the eleventh century joint patronage could enhance the reputation of both partners, placing them together within established imperial tradition.

Maria Skleraina, Constantine IX Monomachos and the Mangana

Maria Skleraina was from the Skleros family, who seem to have originated in the Byzantine province of Lesser Armenia.¹⁰ Her history is

⁶ For the possibility that acts of foundation in middle-Byzantine Constantinople could communicate multiple symbolic meanings: Stanković 2011, 47-71.

⁷ Angelova 2015.

⁸ Angelova 2015, 167-168, pointing out that Procopius obscures Theodora's role as a joint patron with Justinian, which is visible in material evidence. For focalisation upon the emperor in eleventh-century histories: Neville 2019, 88.

⁹ Demirtiken 2019, 182-191.

¹⁰ For a prosopographical study of Skleraina: Seibt 1976, 71-76. See also: *PBW* 2016, "Maria" no. 64 <<https://pbw2016.kdl.kcl.ac.uk/person/107734/>>. Her first name is attested by Christopher of Mytilene, *Poem* 70 and Gregory the Cellarer, *Life of St Lazaros* (tr. Greenfield), 347 (§ 245).

described in several written sources and the information they give on her life is summarised below. The names of Skleraina's parents are unattested, but she was the niece of Basileios Skleros, the brother-in-law of the emperor Romanos III Argyros (r. 1028-1034). She was also the great-granddaughter of Bardas Skleros who had launched two wide-scale rebellions against Basil II (r. 967-1025) in 979 and 986.¹¹ Skleraina was married to a *protospathorios* but was widowed before 1035.¹² Around this time, she embarked upon an open love affair with Constantine Monomachos, who had been previously married to Skleraina's cousin. Psellos' *Chronographia* implies that she resided in Constantinople in these years.¹³ In 1035, Monomachos was exiled to Lesbos by the emperor Michael IV (r. 1034-1041), and Skleraina stayed with him on the island until he was recalled to Constantinople to marry the empress Zoe (b.c. 980 - d. 1050) on 11 June 1042.¹⁴ At some point before 1043, Skleraina also enacted a forceable takeover of the *charistikion* of the monastery of St Mamas (near Constantinople), in lieu of an outstanding debt.¹⁵

¹¹ For the history of these rebellions: Kaldellis 2017, 83-102. The sister of Bardas Skleros was married to John I Tzimiskes before he became ruler: Leo the Deacon, *History* (tr. Mary Talbot & Sullivan), 157-158; Skylitzes, *Synopsis* (ed. Thurn), 288.23-24.

¹² See below, n. 14.

¹³ Psellos' use of the participle μετακαλέσοντες to describe the party sent to bring Skleraina from Lesbos to the capital in c. 1042 implies that she was being recalled: Psellos, *Chronographia* (ed. Reinsch), 366.18.

¹⁴ Following, Psellos, *Chronographia* (ed. Reinsch) 326, 364-366. See also: Zonaras, *Epitome* (ed. Büttner-Wobst), 618-619. For the date of the marriage: Skylitzes, *Synopsis* (ed. Thurn), 423.

¹⁵ The case is recorded in Eustathios Rhomaïos' compendium of eleventh-century legal disputes. The dispute must have taken place before Skleraina's acclamation as *Sebaste* in c. 1043, because Skleraina is described as a *protospatharissa*: Rhomaïos, *Peira* (ed. Zepos), vol. 4, 54.18-24. Seibt thought that this dispute must have taken place during Skleraina's husband's lifetime before 1035: Seibt 1976, 71. However, Byzantine women often continued to use the equivalent of their husband's titles as widows. For the location of St Mamas, possibly in modern-day Besiktas: Janin 1969, 314-319. For the *charistikion* system, whereby lay people held administrative responsibility for monastic estates: Bartusis 1991. Skleraina's date of birth is not known, but she was probably at least 25 by 1042-1043. This was the minimum age that Byzantine women could administer property and conclude contracts independently: Prinzing 2009, 33-34.

Upon arrival in Constantinople, Monomachos asked Zoe that Skleraina be allowed to follow him to the city. The empress assented and, according to Zonaras, Skleraina subsequently moved into a house in the Kynegion area of Constantinople.¹⁶ This place was likely located close to the northern section of the Marmara Sea Walls, near the Acropolis on the first hill of Constantinople, in an area now known also as the Sarayburnu promontory.¹⁷ The Mangana itself also occupied the area now between the Sea Walls and the Topkapi Palace, which now stands on the former Acropolis. The original site of the Mangana was likely to the south of the Kynegion (fig. 2). Around the time of Skleraina's arrival, building works in the Mangana, which had been an imperial house since the ninth century, were initiated.¹⁸ It is likely that these building works subsumed the Kynegion area as the site of the Mangana was expanded. The building program was one of several begun during the reign of Monomachos.¹⁹ At the Mangana, the pre-existing church of St George and a palace were rebuilt. Additional buildings were also constructed, including a monas-

¹⁶ Zonaras, *Epitome*, (ed. Büttner-Wobst), 647.1-4; Psellos, *Chronographia* (ed. Reinsch), 364-366. Both imply that it was soon after Monomachos' wedding to Zoe, which was in June 1042.

¹⁷ The Kynegion area was erected by Severus as an amphitheatre. It was located nearby the ancient temple of Artemis on the Acropolis: Malalas, *Chronographia* (ed. Thurn), 221.75-222.78; *Chronicon Paschale* (ed. Dindorf), 495. The *Codex Theodosianus* (ed. Mommsen & Meyer), 2, 784 (§ 14.6.5), describes an area of furnaces running along the Sea Walls, extended by an amphitheatre, likely the Kynegion. The area of the Sea Walls nearest the Acropolis is towards the north of the Sarayburnu promontory and thus this is the probable location of the Kynegion. Van Millingen 1899, 251, identified as the Kynegion a hollow behind the Değirmen Kapısı sea gate (fig. 1), but did not cite his sources. See also, Mango 1985, 19 n.36, Cameron et. al. 1984, 201, Janin 1964, 14; Martiny 1938. For the link between the Acropolis and the Topkapi: Dark & Harris 2008, 58.

¹⁸ Although, Constantine VII, *Life of Basil* (ed. Ševčenko), 298-300, identifies Basil I as the founder of the imperial house at the Mangana, Lemerle 1977, 273, showed the house belonged to the patriarch Ignatios and his father Michael I (r. 811-813). Kaplan 2006, 176-177, argued it was an imperial house by 815 at the latest, and retained this status during Ignatios' tenure. The house of the Mangana is attested in the possession of the convent of St Olympias in 532: Magdalino 2007, 49, n.184.

¹⁹ For Monomachos' rebuilding of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem: Ousterhout 1989. For Nea Moni on Chios: Mouriki 1985.

tery, a house for the poor, a hostel, a poor house, a hospital and a law-school. Extensive landscaped features were also added to the site.²⁰ It is likely that Monomachos bestowed estates upon the Mangana at this time, adding to an endowment which was probably already sizeable.²¹

The Mangana area is still a significant feature of the Sarayburnu promontory (figs. 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 & 7). The site has been excavated once, by the French military in 1922-23. Their findings were published by Demangel and Mamboury in 1939.²² It is around 800m long and divided into two terraces by a high wall that runs the length of the site. The higher terrace is narrow, but still spacious enough to accommodate designed landscape features. The lower terrace is wide and levelled, featuring the substructures which Demangel and Mamboury identified as the monastery and church of St George, and the palace.²³ These substructures and the terraced walls all feature incidences of recessed brickwork, a technique which was often used in Byzantine construction between the late-tenth and mid-thirteenth centuries.²⁴ The brickwork is a further indicator that these buildings were developed during Monomachos' reign, in the mid-eleventh century. Near the site of the palace, the Marmara Sea Walls feature a tripartite set of arches, which Mavis Zulueta argued functioned as a sea entrance to the site (fig. 7).²⁵

²⁰ Skylitzes, *Synopsis* (ed. Thurn), 477.61-63; Attaleiates, *History* (ed. Pérez), 36.11-20. The law school is attested in a foundation document drafted by Mauropous: Zepos & Zepos 1931, I, 620. The landscaped features are described most extensively by Psellos, *Chronographia* (ed. Reinsch), 524-530. For the monastery: Janin 1969, 70-76. For evidence that from the late-eighth through to the eleventh centuries philanthropy was increasingly enacted through imperial foundations: Kaplan 2006, 178-183.

²¹ The Mangana possessed a wheat mill, a bakery and land in Constantinople and in the provinces, possibly including a vineyard in the region of Thebes: Oikonomides 1980/81, 241-242. The only acquisition firmly dated to Monomachos' reign is land in Euchaïta: Kaplan 2006, 180.

²² Demangel & Mamboury 1939.

²³ Here I follow the observations of Henry Maguire, who was able to access the site: Maguire 2000, 259-262.

²⁴ Maguire 2000, 261. For recessed brickwork see Krautheimer & Ćurčić 1986, 354, 504-505 n.3.

²⁵ Zulueta 2000, 253-267.

Sometime after returning to Constantinople, Skleraina moved again and took up residence in the Great Palace. This possibly took place in 1043.²⁶ She now received the title *sebastē* (Σεβαστή, a Greek translation of *augusta*). Her position was ratified in a ceremony involving herself, Monomachos and Zoe, and witnessed by the imperial court. Skleraina then participated in ceremonial alongside both Zoe and her sister, the empress Theodora. According to Psellos, Skleraina was now addressed as *despoina* and *basilis*.²⁷ It is very likely these titles and Skleraina's appearance in ceremonial were intended to emphasise that she was a member of the imperial family, alongside Monomachos, Zoe and Theodora. Dumbarton Oaks seal BZS.1958.106.39, first published by Oikonomides, shows that around this time Skleraina gained possession of a new administrative unit at the Mangana titled 'St George the Great-Martyr and Trophy-Bearer'.²⁸ Her presence in the palace was controversial, provoking a disturbance amongst the Constantinopolitan populace in March 1044, where, according to John Skylitzes, a crowd accused her of threatening the lives of Zoe and Theodora.²⁹ Skleraina died from an asthmatic disease before May 1046.³⁰ Monomachos built a tomb in St

²⁶ This date is based upon the description provided by Skylitzes of a protest about Skleraina's presence in the Great Palace on 11 March 1044 (n.28).

²⁷ Psellos, *Chronographia* (ed. Reinsch), 370-374.

²⁸ For a full transcript and translation, and an image of the seal: Oikonomides 1980/81, 239, 247. The inscription reads: Σφραγίς τοῦ σεκρέτου τοῦ ἁγίου μεγαλομάρτυρος Γεωργίου τοῦ Τροπαιοφόρου καὶ οἴκου τῆς ὑπερπεριλάμπρου καὶ εὐτυχεστάτης σεβαστῆς. Oikonomides did not mention an unnamed *sebastē* who is described in a letter written by Psellos during Isaac's reign: Psellos, *Letters* (ed. Papaioannou), vol. 1, 95.42 (no. 40). It is possible that this *sebastē* is Maria Komnene, the daughter of Isaac I Komnenos, who could therefore be the *sebastē* who possessed the seal. Yet, both Skylitzes and Zonaras describe how Isaac gained control of the property titles to the Mangana in the last months of his reign, with no reference to Komnene: Skylitzes, *Continuation* (ed. Tsolakakis), 106.3-22 (tr. McGeer – Nesbitt, 1.4, 42-46); Zonaras, *Epitome* (ed. Büttner-Wobst), 670-671. Therefore, we should follow Oikonomides' identification of Skleraina as the owner of the seal.

²⁹ Skylitzes, *Synopsis* (ed. Thurn), 434, who says that it was on the feast day of the Forty Martyrs of Sebasteia (11 March 1044).

³⁰ Her death is described by Psellos, *Chronographia* (ed. Reinsch), 382-384. This date is based upon a chrysobull from May 1046 referring to the *sekretion* of St George that makes no reference to Skleraina: Oikonomides 1980/81, 240, 243.

George to commemorate her.³¹ The rebuilt church of St George was inaugurated around April 1047, and it is possible that Skleraina's remains were transferred to the church around this time.³² She was the subject of a long encomiastic poem written by Psellos, titled *Verses of Psellos at the Tomb of the Sebaste*, which was likely to have been performed in St George.³³ Monomachos himself died in 1055, when he was buried alongside Skleraina.³⁴

Skleraina's possession of the *oikos* of the *sekreton* of St George

Although, as we have noted, Skleraina's uncle had been the brother-in-law of Romanos III Argyros, her claim to imperial status seems to have been founded mainly upon her relationship with Monomachos. This is suggested by Psellos' account of the ceremony before the imperial court, enacted by Skleraina, Monomachos and Zoe. Skleraina's claim was therefore tenuous because the relationship lay outside the boundaries of Christian teaching on monogamy and marriage. Monomachos' legitimate wife, the empress Zoe, seems to have been popular amongst her subjects. For these reasons, Skleraina appears to have been perceived negatively by portions of the Constantinopolitan population and perhaps further afield in the Byzantine provinces. Her unpopularity was especially dangerous because the previous emperor Michael V had been overthrown by an uprising in 1041.³⁵ The protest against Monomachos

³¹ Psellos, *Chronographia* (ed. Reinsch), 384, describes Constantine's construction of a tomb for Skleraina. Choniates, *History* (ed. Van Dieten), 614, describes how in 1205 Hugh Count of St Pol was buried in Skleraina's tomb in the Mangana.

³² Lefort 1976, suggested the church was inaugurated on 21 April 1047, based upon his reading of John Mauropous' speeches 181 and 182, but it is not certain either speech marks the day the church was inaugurated.

³³ See below.

³⁴ For Monomachos' burial at the Mangana: Attaleiates, *History* (ed. Pérez), 36.5. Skylitzes, *Synopsis* (ed. Thurn), 478.92-93, Glykas, *Annals* (ed. Bekker), 599.9-10.

³⁵ Zoe's widespread popularity is presented as a driving force behind the uprising against Michael V in 1041 by Psellos, *Chronographia* (ed. Reinsch), 274-276 Her popularity seems connected to her status (alongside her sister, Theodora) as heir to Basil II and Constantine VIII: Skylitzes, *Synopsis* (ed. Thurn), 418-419; Attaleiates, *History* (ed. Pérez), 11. An interpolation to several manuscripts of Skylitzes' *Synopsis* describes

and Skleraina described by Skylitzes shows that they too were vulnerable, as the political situation remained volatile.

The attachment of the Monomachoi to St George is well known. Monomachos' redevelopment of the church of St George was likely intended as a statement of this family's supremacy.³⁶ It also functioned alongside the other building projects which this emperor sponsored, to develop his image as a benevolent and munificent ruler. Despite clear evidence for her links to the Mangana, the possibility that an association with the site also influenced Skleraina's reputation has received less attention in modern studies. Below I argue that Skleraina's connection with the Mangana substantiated her imperial status by enabling her to enact model imperial behaviour, framing her controversial relationship with Monomachos as akin to imperial marriages from previous generations. I suggest this process worked through two main avenues. These were Skleraina's involvement with the *sekretion* of St George the Great Martyr and Trophy-bearer, which I examine first, and her direction of the building works at the site.

Seal BZS.1958.106.39 shows that the *sekretion* of St George was Skleraina's *oikos*. Her possession of this *oikos* shows that the *sekretion* was established before the dedication of the church of St George in 1047, after Skleraina had died. Skleraina is named *hyperperilampros* and *eutychestatē sebastē* on the seal, so the *sekretion* probably became her *oikos* around 1043, after she moved into the Great Palace and received the title. The Mangana area is described in a chrysobull issued by Monomachos as a εὐαγγής οἶκος (a pious institution created to assist the needy). The *sekretion* is also linked with a confraternity (known as a diaconate) in an epigram produced by John Mauropous for a book likely donated to the church of St George which mentions the 'diaconate of

Skleraina as unpopular amongst the wider population and the Byzantine court. The interpolator was possibly Bulgarian: Thurn 1973, xxxiv.

³⁶ Several tenth and eleventh-century seals belonging to the Monomachoi feature a bust of St George. An epigram in *Marc. gr.* 524 also mentions that Constantine IX Monomachos kept a fragment of St George's sword in his *encolpion*: Nesbitt & Oikonomides 1996, 59; Spingou 2015, 62 n.70.

the Trophy-bearer'.³⁷ Oikonomides thus suggested that the *sekretion* was founded ostensibly to administer revenue from the Mangana's estates which funded charitable activities at the site.³⁸ However, he proposed, the *sekretion* was in practice founded by Monomachos to provide funds to Skleraina, because she was allowed to siphon off revenue from the institution to enact patronage and gift giving.³⁹ This suggestion has been followed by several scholars of eleventh-century Byzantium.⁴⁰ Two written sources however problematise Oikonomides' proposal. In the *Chronographia*, Psellos writes that Skleraina supported Monomachos when he was in exile by providing him with her possessions.⁴¹ As we have seen, Eustathios Rhomaios' *Peira* shows that she was in the possession of the *charistikion* of the monastery of St Mamas before she became *sebastē*. Both texts indicate that Skleraina was already substantially wealthy before 1042 and so may not have been economically dependent on the *sekretion*.

I suggest that the *sekretion* was indeed founded for Skleraina, but that her links with the institution were established primarily for propaganda, to substantiate her imperial status. Here it is worth noting the appearance of the epithet *eutychestatēs* on her seal. This word is elsewhere only associated with the rank of *kaisar*, the highest position after the emperor himself.⁴² It translates as 'most happy' and communicates a sense

³⁷ The epigram is titled: Εἰς τὸ βιβλίον τῆς διακονίας τοῦ τροπαιοφόρου: Mauropous, *Poem* 71, the latest editors of the text Bernard and Livanos link it the church of St George. For the diaconate: Magdalino 2007, 35.

³⁸ The chrysobull was issued for the Nea Moni foundation on Chios, possibly in 1054: Zepos & Zepos 1931, 629-631. See, Morris 1995, 49 n. 49. Byzantine law distinguished between εὐαγεῖς οἶκοι and imperial estates: Kazhdan & Cappel 2005.

³⁹ Oikonomides identified the *oikos* of the *sekretion* with a passage in Psellos' *Chronographia*, which describes how Monomachos assigned Skleraina with an *oikos* to fund gift-giving: Oikonomides 1980/81, 241-242; Psellos, *Chronographia* (ed. Reinsch), 372-74.

⁴⁰ Bartusis 2013, 117; Cheynet (tr. Wortley), 2010, 444 n.199; Agapitos 2008, 560; Garland 1999, 149.

⁴¹ Psellos, *Chronographia* (ed. Reinsch), 364; Psellos, *Verses* (ed. Spadaro), 86.392-397, also describe Skleraina as a support for Monomachos.

⁴² See for example, Constantine VII, *Book of Ceremonies* (ed. Reiske), 225, 227, 443, 457. See also the use of εὐτυχεστάτος on the twelfth-century seals of Nikephoros Me-

that the subject has been blessed. It therefore implies that Skleraina is a member of the imperial family and that she will do good works in return for the blessings she has received. Piety and a concern for social justice are together presented as an imperial virtue in an abundance of Byzantine texts.⁴³ Early Byzantine empresses expressed piety and munificence by caring for the poor and building churches.⁴⁴ In the middle-Byzantine period, some eleventh- and twelfth-century documents and letters express the sentiment that it was appropriate for imperial women to act generously in recompense to God for their elevated social position.⁴⁵ The language on Skleraina's seal seems therefore to imply that through the *sekretion*, she will enact model imperial behaviour.

Alongside her seal, it is likely that an eleventh-century bronze tesserae fragment also describes Skleraina. It is inscribed 'nourishment for the poor from the *sebastē* Maria'. Although he did not develop the point further, Oikonomides suggested that these distributions were channelled through the *ptōchotropheion* of the *sekretion* of St George and that Skleraina used them for personal propaganda.⁴⁶ The use of *sebastē* on the fragment here indicates that these charitable distributions were intended to substantiate the imperial status of her title. We also have written evidence that as *sebastē*, Skleraina donated money to fund a religious foundation. The *Life of St Lazaros of Galesion* records that she donated 720 *nomismata* to fund most of the building work at a foundation named the Pausolype, along with imperial furnishings to adorn the site.⁴⁷ This was one of several monasteries within the compass of the community which flourished under the pillar-saint Lazaros around Mount Galesion

lissenos and Anna Komnene, who was probably his daughter: Zacos & Veglery 1972, nos. 2699, 2722.

⁴³ A pious concern for social justice is often described with the words *φιλανθρωπία* and *εὐεργέτης* in Byzantine written sources: Constantelos 1968, 43-61.

⁴⁴ Angelova 2004, 5; McClanan 1996, 50-57.

⁴⁵ See for example: Eirene Doukaina, *Typikon* for Theorokos Kecharitomene (ed. Thomas & Constantinides Hero), Prologue; Psellos, *Letters* (ed. Papaioannou), vol. 1, 1.1-3 (no.1).

⁴⁶ Oikonomides 1980/81, 242-243. The Greek inscription τροφή πενήτων τῆς σεβαστῆς Μαρίας is provided on these pages.

⁴⁷ Gregory the Cellarer, *Life of St Lazaros* (tr. Greenfield), 347 (§ 245).

(near Ephesos) between c. 1019 and 1053. The *Vita* was written around 1057, but the precision of its account of Skleraina's donation suggests that the information was recorded at the Pausolype during her lifetime, perhaps in an epigram at the site.⁴⁸

The location of the Pausolype is not attested in the *Vita*, but it is twice mentioned in the same passages as the monastery of Bessai, which was close to Galesion. The Pausolype was probably also near to Galesion and Richard Greenfield has suggested it might be identified with the convent of Eupraxia, which was built at the base of the mountain.⁴⁹ The identification of the Pausolype with this convent is tempting because the passage of the *Vita* describing Skleraina's donation also mentions that Monomachos granted land for Lazaros to found the male monastery of Bessai.⁵⁰ Monomachos' donation was made on condition the monks there prayed for the remembrance of himself and Skleraina. Whether or not the Pausolype is to be identified with the convent of Eupraxia, the evidence from the *Vita* suggests that Skleraina and Monomachos' actions were presented as a joint donation, and that it was understood as such by members of St Lazaros' community. The impression that Skleraina and Monomachos' actions complemented one another would have been reinforced if Skleraina funded the women's community at Eupraxia, whilst Monomachos donated to the men's community at Bessai. It is likely that Skleraina's donation was intended to present her as a joint benefactor of the Galesion community, alongside Monomachos. The inclusion of imperial furnishings in the donation seems also have been intended as an affirmation that Skleraina's philanthropic behaviour was imperial.

⁴⁸ For the chronology of Lazaros' life and career, and the establishment of a monastic community at Galesion, and the date of the *Vita*: Greenfield 2000.

⁴⁹ Greenfield 2000, 35.

⁵⁰ There has been scholarly discussion on whether the Bessai of the *Vita* is the same as the Bessai which is mentioned in Monomachos' chrysobull to Nea Moni. The Bessai of the chrysobull is probably a different place because it lay near the village of Ataia, which was likely far from Galesion: Greenfield 2000, 33 n.185, Malamut 1985, 248-251. Oikonomides 1980/81, 241 n.24, states that land donated to Lazaros was from the Mangana's estates, but this is not firmly attested.

The *Vita* shows that Galesion was a hub for pilgrims from different social and geographical backgrounds across the Byzantine Empire, with visitors peaking in the 1040s.⁵¹ The Pausolype may well have acted as a waypoint for pilgrims to Lazaros' pillar. Skleraina and Monomachos' donations were therefore presented before an Empire-wide audience. The *sekreton* of St George is not mentioned in the *Vita*, but it would make sense if the *nomismata* sent to Galesion were drawn from the institution.⁵² The establishment of a connection with the Mangana through the *sekreton* would clearly have enhanced the propaganda value of Skleraina's donation. The Mangana's status as an imperial house would have stressed the imperial nature of Skleraina's charity. The quantity of written evidence linking Monomachos to the Mangana shows that his involvement with the site was well known and so a connection here would have emphasised to pilgrims that Skleraina's donation to the Pausolype paralleled the emperor's patronage.

Skylitzes and Zonaras both give a brief description of the responsibilities of Skleraina's Constantine Leichoudes, who Oikonomides identified as Skleraina's successor. They say that between the reign of Monomachos and the last year of Isaac I Komnenos' reign in 1059 he had a role as guardian of the Mangana's property titles, which involved an administrative function.⁵³ Yet, no scholar has suggested that Skleraina also performed an administrative role connected to the Mangana's function as a εὐαγγῆς οἶκος, even though she was Leichoudes' predecessor. The possibility that Skleraina's charitable activity was funded by money channelled through the *sekreton* of St George however suggests

⁵¹ This is argued by, Greenfield 2002, 213-241, who provides a summary of the passages in the *Vita* which show the variety of pilgrims who visited Galesion, ranging from the destitute to provincial and Constantinopolitan elites. According to the *Vita*, Skleraina's brother Romanos visited the shrine in this period: Gregory the Cellarer, *Life of St Lazaros* (tr. Greenfield), 177-178 (§ 87).

⁵² As suggested by Oikonomides 1980/81, 242 n.39.

⁵³ Skylitzes, *Continuation* (ed. Tsolakis), 106-107; Zonaras, *Epitome* (ed. Büttner-Wobst), 670-671. Oikonomides proposed that an inscription on the 'Malyj Sion' in Novgorod describes Leichoudes as the *oikonomenos* of the Tropaiophoros, suggesting that he was Skleraina's successor to the *sekreton* after her death. See further: Lemerle 1977, 280-283.

this. Skleraina's possession of the *charistikion* of St Mamas also suggests that she would have been capable of administering the *sekretion* of St George.⁵⁴ It is plausible that Skleraina's possession of the *oikos* of the *sekretion* of St George involved oversight of the redistribution of revenue from the Mangana's estates to charitable ventures.⁵⁵ Here, Skleraina's visible involvement with the charitable ventures at the Mangana would have underlined that her behaviour was imperial, and framed her as a partner of the emperor.

Skleraina and Monomachos as joint-founders of the Mangana

Written sources for Skleraina's arrival in Constantinople (soon after June 1042) indicate that she moved close to the Mangana area before she became *Sebaste* and gained possession of the *oikos* of the *sekretion* of St George. Her place of residence seems likely to have associated her with the rebuilding of the area. In the *Chronographia*, Psellos provides the lengthiest account of Skleraina's arrival in the city, but it lacks clear topographical details. Furthermore, aspects of the account connect to other parts of book six of the *Chronographia*, probably written around 1059-1063, which seem designed to diminish Constantine Monomachos' image by depicting him as an indolent and irresponsible ruler.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ For evidence of women in administrative roles see the late eleventh-century *Cadaster of Thebes*, which shows that women regularly assumed headship of a household if their husband died. The text is published at: Svoronos 1959, 11-19. For women administrators see also: Mokhov & Kapsalykova 2017. Anna Dalassene also possessed a *sekretion* attached to the Myrelaion complex: Oikonomides 1980/81, 245 n.58; Janin 1969, 352. She was also responsible for the administration of the Empire during Alexios I's war with Robert Guiscard, attested in a chrysobull recorded by Anna Komnene, *Alexiad* (ed. Reinsch – Kambylis), 101-103 (3.6.5-8).

⁵⁵ As Kaplan 2006, 180, notes, we lack precise information on the management of the Mangana. Dalassene had 'a representative' (ὁ ἐκπροσωπῶν) who managed the administration of her *sekretion* at the Myrelaion: Oikonomides 1980/81, 245 n. 58. However, we should not, like, Garland 2007, assume that Dalassene exercised no general oversight of the functioning of the *sekretion*.

⁵⁶ Psellos, *Chronographia* (ed. Reinsch), 366-370. Elsewhere in book 6, Psellos resolves to describe the negative aspects of Monomachos' reign even though this emperor had

Psellos' account in the *Chronographia* is therefore problematic, and it is likely the text distorts aspects of Skleraina's history, to develop a narrative focalised upon the emperor.

Some details in the *Chronographia* do however make sense when compared with a passage in Zonaras' history, and wider evidence for the history of the topography of Constantinople. Together, the evidence from these two texts suggests that Skleraina was closely linked to the Mangana from very early in Monomachos' reign. These texts also hint these connections were designed to substantiate comparisons between Skleraina and Monomachos and other imperial couples. This suggests the message communicated by Skleraina's possession of the *oikos* of the *sekretion* of St George from c1043 built upon a broader association with the Mangana area, established from the outset of Monomachos' reign.

In the *Chronographia*, Psellos writes that Skleraina first moved into a modest place of residence in Constantinople (εὐτελεστέρας). According to Psellos, Monomachos then initiated building work around this place and would cite the need to inspect the progress of the work as an excuse to visit. Next, Psellos claims the couple abandoned secrecy and Skleraina and Monomachos accompanied each other around her residence 'out in the open air' (ὑπαιθρον). Two separate passages within Zonaras' history also describe Skleraina's arrival. The first follows Psellos' account closely. In the second, Zonaras repeats Psellos' story that Monomachos began work at the Mangana to visit Skleraina, but he adds that Skleraina settled at the Kynegion. Zonaras uses the word λέγεται at the beginning of this passage.⁵⁷ It is possible that Zonaras uses this word as a source marker to assure his audience that this deviation from the account in the *Chronographia* is connected to an established tradition

been his patron, because as a historian he is compelled to write truthfully: Psellos, *Chronographia* (ed. Reinsch), 328-340. Kaldellis has noticed these sections work to add weight to the moments in the text when Psellos describes Constantine as a bad ruler, possibly serving as revenge for this emperor's failure to protect Psellos in 1054: Kaldellis 2017, 181, 213. See also: Spadaro 1984, 34-36. The date of the first seven books of the *Chronographia* was established by, Sykutris 1929/30, 63; Hussey 1935, 82-83.

⁵⁷ The two passages are, Zonaras, *Epitome* (ed. Büttner-Wobst), 619-620 & 646.18-647. 4.

concerning Skleraina and the Mangana.⁵⁸ I suggest that Zonaras may have learnt about Skleraina's residence at the Kynegion through an oral tradition current in twelfth-century Constantinople.⁵⁹ The existence of this oral tradition may also explain the scarcity of topographical details in the *Chronographia*. It is possible that when Psellos wrote the text between 1059-61, Skleraina's connections to the Mangana were well-known enough that he could omit specific details, to develop his account stylistically.

If we follow the information given by Zonaras, it is worth considering why Skleraina would have moved to the Kynegion, rather than another area of Constantinople.⁶⁰ We should approach with caution the explanation provided by Psellos (followed by Zonaras) that the arrangement was designed so Monomachos could conduct secret visits. In the first place, Psellos' depiction of Skleraina's secretive presence in Constantinople is contradicted by a description in the proceeding passage of the *Chronographia* that she returned to the city with a sizeable imperial escort.⁶¹ This story is also problematised by a passage in Skylitzes' history, which suggests that Skleraina's brother Romanos received the titles *magistros* and *prōtostratōr* before September 1042, very soon after Monomachos became emperor.⁶² These passages indicate that Monomachos made no attempt to disguise his links with the Skleroi in the first months of his reign. They suggest that Psellos' description of Monoma-

⁵⁸ For the use of λέγεται as a source marker by Plutarch, who was historical source and stylistic exemplar for Zonaras: Cook 2001.

⁵⁹ For the culture of orality in the spaces where twelfth-century histories were performed, suggesting a possible context where Zonaras might have encountered this tradition: Neville 2012, 29-38.

⁶⁰ We have seen that by 1042 Skleraina possessed the *charistikion* of the monastery of St Mamas, in the suburbs of Constantinople. It is likely that the Skleroi possessed households in Constantinople. Presumably, Skleraina could have taken up residence in one of these places.

⁶¹ Psellos, *Chronographia* (ed. Reinsch), 366.

⁶² Skylitzes, *Synopsis* (ed. Thurn), 427-428, writes that Romanos Skleros received the titles of *magistros* and *prōtostratōr* before Maniakes began his rebellion. The *Annales Baresnes* (ed. Pertz), 56.33, attest that Maniakes rebelled September 1043. However, the text begins each yearly entry in September, so this date should be adjusted to 1042: Loud 2019, 1.

chos' and Skleraina's secretive behaviour may be disingenuous and possibly designed to tarnish Monomachos' reputation.⁶³

On the other hand, considering the evidence that Monomachos touted his connections with the Skleroi from the outset of his reign, Psellos' reference to Skleraina and Monomachos' public appearances seem plausible. Evidence from the topography of the Sarayburnu promontory also supports a hypothesis on these appearances. The Mangana area now extends north, ending near the Column of the Goths and the northern part of the Gülhane Park. As we have noted, the incidences of recessed brickwork in the long-terraced wall, which extends close to the northern tip of the Sarayburnu, suggest that it was built during Monomachos' reign. If so, then it is probable that the perimeter of the site was expanded in the 1040s. The Kynegion area, which was likely located in an area of the sea walls close to the Acropolis and north of the church of St George and the palace, was in all probability subsumed by the Mangana in this period (fig. 2, fig. 6). This explains Psellos' description of building work around Skleraina's residence. Elsewhere in the *Chronographia* Psellos includes an ekphrasis of the Mangana which describes several auxiliary edifices dotted around the outside of the site.⁶⁴ Skleraina's residence may have been one of these buildings, which, having been originally located in the Kynegion, was surrounded by construction work as it was incorporated into the Mangana.

Given the proximity of Skleraina's residence to the building works, it is possible that Monomachos used it as a base to conduct inspections of the development of the site. He may well have arrived at the Mangana by ship at a sea gate near to this place.⁶⁵ This raises the possibility that Skleraina appeared publicly alongside Monomachos on these occasions, and thus was presented as performing a role in the development of the site. Therefore, the appearances described by Psellos may well be connected to occasions which did take place.

⁶³ As noted by Lemerle 1977, 274-275 n.56, who also highlighted the contradiction between Psellos' description of Monomachos and Skleraina's secretive behaviour and the account of their public appearances.

⁶⁴ Psellos, *Chronographia* (ed. Reinsch), 526-528.

⁶⁵ Possibly the Değirmen Kapısı sea gate as suggested by Van Millingen 1899, 251.

Overall, the possibility that Skleraina lived amidst the building work of the Mangana, where she also made public appearances, suggests that her move to the Kynegion was intended to frame her as leader of the redevelopment of the area. Psellos' suggestion that Monomachos and Skleraina appeared in public because they had tired of secrecy may then be a disingenuous reference to formal occasions which visualised Skleraina and Monomachos' connections to the development of the Mangana. It is in fact possible that the oral tradition perhaps used by Zonaras, associating Skleraina with the building of the Mangana, sprang from this initiative of imperial propaganda.

Here it is worth noting that Psellos also describes a gift sent by Monomachos to Skleraina, sometime before she entered the Great Palace. This was a container (πίθον χαλκόν) filled with money, which also featured figures carved in relief. Psellos writes that Monomachos found it in the Great Palace and that it was one of the many gifts which were conveyed to Skleraina (ἐπ' ἄλλοις τῇ ἐρωμένη ἀπεκομίζοντο). The attention which Psellos gives to this object suggests that it was well-known in mid-eleventh century Constantinople, when he wrote the *Chronographia*. It is possible that it was prominently displayed in the church of St George, or one of the other buildings at the Mangana.⁶⁶ There is a hint here that Skleraina and Monomachos cooperated to adorn St George. The *Chronographia* may in fact put a negative spin on an arrangement where Monomachos sent spolia to Skleraina, who was then involved with the redistribution of the materials at the Mangana. This arrangement would have reinforced the impression created by Skleraina and Monomachos' public appearances, by further presenting them as re-founders of the site. The possibility that Skleraina and Monomachos cooperated to convey luxury items to the Mangana is also suggested in the epigram of Mauropous, linked with the diaconate of the Trophy-bearer, which was likely inscribed on a book used in the church of St George.

⁶⁶ Psellos, *Chronographia* (ed. Reinsch), 368-370. Psellos' description of the figures carved in relief suggests it might have been one of the well-known middle-Byzantine ivory caskets. See: Kalavrezou 1997, 219-223, 227-237, who also notes that secular luxury objects were sometimes appropriated for ecclesiastical purposes. Casket no. 156 has gilded copper mounts, which may be what Psellos means by χαλκόν.

The verses associate the *sebastos* Monomachos and the *pansebastois augoustais* with the donation.⁶⁷ The use of this adjective likely implied that the *Sebaste* Skleraina was one of the imperial women involved with the donation of the book.

Presentations of Skleraina and Monomachos as joint renovators of the Mangana must have been most prominent in the months before Skleraina moved into the Great Palace, likely late in 1043. Their actions here thus foreshadowed their joint patronage of the communities at Galesion, which took place after Skleraina gained the *oikos* of the *sekreton* of St George in c. 1043. Passages in the late tenth-century *Patria* shed light on why Skleraina and Monomachos may have attempted to present themselves as joint renovators of the Mangana and joint patrons of Galesion.⁶⁸ The *Patria* describes several imperial figures as joint founders and renovators of churches. Amongst these are Pulcheria and Marcianos (r. 450-457), who are credited with the rebuilding (ἀνοικοδομήν) of St Menas, when they also bestowed estates (τοῖς προαστείσις) and holy vessels (ιεροῖς σκεύεσι) upon the foundation.⁶⁹ The details of these memories of their patronage bear parallels with the actions of Monomachos and Skleraina at the Mangana. The evidence in the *Patria* also gives an impression that joint patronage of religious buildings was perceived as model behaviour for imperial couples in the middle-Byzantine period, when the text was compiled.

Two well-known donor mosaics in St Sophia also present two imperial couples cooperating in their patronage of the church. The earliest depicts Monomachos himself alongside his legitimate wife Zoe (fig. 8), and the second shows John II Komnenos and Piroaska-Eirene. In both the emperor offers an ἀποκόμβιον (purse) and the empress presents a document, which probably represents a privilege to the Church. The mosaic of Monomachos also seems to have been tiled over a previous mosaic depicting Romanos III Argyros (r. 1028-1034), so Monomachos there-

⁶⁷ Mauropous, *Poem* 71, l. 8.

⁶⁸ The *Patria* was compiled in 989/90 but redacted in the late eleventh century: Berger 2013, xvi. For the prominence of imperial founders: James 2014, 69.

⁶⁹ *Patria* (tr. Berger), 141. For Anastasios and Ariadne as joint-founders, *ibid.*, 169. For Justin II and Sophia: *ibid.*, 167.

fore likely replicated an original donation to the St Sophia which was made by Romanos and Zoe.⁷⁰

The appearance of these couples as patrons of the St Sophia would have connected them with the sixth-century founder Justinian and his wife Theodora. There was a dedicatory inscription from the couple inscribed on an altar in the church, a joint cruciform monogram inscribed on the templon screen, and their monograms also appear on several capitals at the site. These features imply they both contributed to the foundation of the church in 537.⁷¹ Monomachos and Zoe also seem to have co-operated to develop the monastery of Nea Moni on Chios.⁷² John II and Piroska-Eirene on the other hand were presented as joint-founders of the Pantokrator complex during the 1120s. Here they followed John's parents, Alexios I and Eirene, who patronised foundations adjacent to one another, the Philanthropos and Kecharitomene.⁷³ Skylitzes also provides a further example of an imperial couple who acted as joint-re-founders. He mentions that the emperor Isaac I and his wife Aikaterine adorned the church of St John Prodromos at Stoudios. Isaac was a usurper, so he and his wife must have felt pressed to publicly enact model imperial behaviour.⁷⁴ These examples show Skleraina and Monomachos' behaviour matched that of other imperial couples during the eleventh and twelfth centuries, and earlier, who each prioritised action presenting themselves as joint-patrons of churches.

⁷⁰ Demonstrated by Whittemore 1942, 17-20. See further: Oikonomides 1978; Kalavrezou 1992. Skylitzes, *Synopsis* (ed. Thurn), 477.63-67, describes how Monomachos augmented the revenue of St Sophia so that the liturgy could be celebrated there every day. This was similar to Argyros' donation of a supplementary annual income of 80 litrai to St Sophia also described by, Skylitzes, *Synopsis* (ed. Thurn), 375.49-54.

⁷¹ Garipzanov 2018, 180-182; Angelova 2015, 167-172, 222. For evidence that contemporaries perceived Justinian and Theodora as joint founders of Hagia Sophia: Unterweger 2014, 106-108.

⁷² A chrysobull issued by Monomachos to Nea Moni in 1048 references the contributions of Zoe and Theodora to the monastery. They are also described as having issued chrysobulls to Nea Moni in a chrysobull of Nikephoros III Botaneiates from 1079: Miklosich & Müller, vol. 5, 9 (no. 6).

⁷³ Demirtiken 2019, 185.

⁷⁴ Skylitzes, *Continuation* (ed. Tsolakis), 110.17-19. For Piroska-Eirene, John II and the Pantokrator: Jeffreys 2019. For Alexios I and Eirene, Demirtiken 2019, 185.

In the *Chronographia*, Psellos presents Skleraina and Monomachos' behaviour in 1042 as impulsive and indolent. Yet, both the *Chronographia* and Zonaras' history hint that Monomachos and Skleraina's initial involvement with the Mangana constituted an attempt to present the couple as joint renovators of the area. Their actions at the site appear to have foreshadowed their subsequent joint donations to Galesion. Skleraina and Monomachos' patronage towards both these foundations matched with established patterns enacted by married imperial couples. Their actions and appearances at the Mangana seem therefore to have been designed to present their relationship as akin to other well-known married imperial couples, past and present.

The built and landscaped environment of the Mangana as a symbol for Skleraina and Monomachos

It is very likely that the church of St George and the wider complex was planned to appear as a conspicuous display of Monomachos' resources, also emphasising his piety and munificence.⁷⁵ Literary descriptions of the environment at the Mangana also include features which are thematically consistent with encomiastic material composed after Skleraina's death. This suggests that literary responses to the built environment there might have been linked to panegyric which crafted Skleraina's reputation. The lengthiest description of the Mangana, provided by Psellos, also matches closely with topographical evidence from the area. It is therefore possible that the built and designed environment at the site worked within a rhetorical programme which established a public image of Skleraina. Below I suggest that the environment of the Mangana was designed to present Skleraina's actions, and her relationship with Monomachos, as model imperial behaviour, providing imagery to visualise her involvement with the site.

⁷⁵ An example of propaganda linking the Mangana with Monomachos' munificence is provided by an epigram in manuscript *Marcianus gr.* 524 which responds to the building work at the Mangana and was likely inscribed on a hall in the palace. See: Spingou 2015, 61-65. The effectiveness of this propaganda is hinted at in, Psellos, *Chronographia* (ed. Reinsch), 650.3-5, describing how Monomachos was nicknamed Κωνσταντῖνος εὐεργέτης.

After she was buried in St George in 1047, Skleraina's tomb remained a significant feature of the interior of the church. In the longer term, tradition seems to have more strongly associated the tomb with her memory, rather than Monomachos, who was also buried there.⁷⁶ I would like to suggest that the building of St George was also designed to influence Skleraina's reputation during her lifetime. This suggestion is supported by the topography of the Mangana, but any investigation of this is complicated by the current difficulty of accessing the area, which is now a military base. A perspective of the Mangana can however be gained from on-board a boat passing through the Bosphorus strait alongside the Sarayburnu promontory. Here, the length of the site causes it to remain in view for around a kilometre. It appears as a lush green area, punctuated by the buildings from the modern military base (figs 3, 4, 5 & 6).

When looking at the Sarayburnu from the sea, the church of St Sophia, where Justinian and Theodora were presented as joint founders, and Romanos III and Zoe as joint patrons, features prominently in the cityscape. The churches of St Sergius and Bacchus and St Eirene are also visible, and their domes appear to align with that of St Sophia. In St Sergius and Bacchus, an inscription on a gallery-level entablature associates both Justinian and Theodora with the church.⁷⁷ Likewise, monograms engraved on the capitals in St Eirene attest that it was redeveloped by both Justinian and Theodora.⁷⁸ The location of St George's substructure shows that its dome would have appeared slightly below St Sophia and St Eirene (figs 1, 2 & 3). The dome may, like that of St Eirene and St Sergius and Bacchus, have also appeared in alignment with St Sophia. The position of St George in Constantinople's skyline would have emphasised that the building, and its patrons, stood within established

⁷⁶ Choniates, *History* (ed. Van Dieten), 614, describes how in 1205 the Crusader Count Hugh of Pol was buried in the tomb of the *Sebaste* Skleraina, without mentioning Monomachos. In the fifteenth century, Ruy González de Clavijo highlights the monumental tomb of an empress as one of the most notable features of St George: Clavijo, *Embassy to Tamerlane* (tr. Strange), 77.

⁷⁷ Angelova 2015, 168-169; Janin 1969, 225.

⁷⁸ Angelova 2015, 168; Janin 1969, 106.

imperial tradition. As St George was constructed, the emergence of the dome in the cityscape must have emphasised that Monomachos was akin to previous imperial patrons of Constantinople's built environment. Yet, if Skleraina's involvement with the building works was well-publicised, as I suggest, then she too would have been associated with the appearance of the dome. In this way, the dome of St George likely presented Monomachos and Skleraina as comparable with imperial couples from past generations.

It is possible that the appearance of the designed landscape around the church of St George also functioned as a symbol for Skleraina. In the *Chronographia*, Psellos' ekphrasis of the environment at the Mangana links gardens and water features in the area with the appearance of the church. Psellos begins his account of the construction of St George with substantial negative colouring, presenting Monomachos' spending on the site as excessive. Yet, the tone of his account changes abruptly at the opening of the ekphrasis, which is celebratory. When the ekphrasis is completed, Psellos returns once more to criticism of Monomachos' involvement with the site. Psellos' ekphrasis does not therefore appear to support the overall literary objective of his account, which seems designed to denigrate Monomachos' reputation. This suggests that the piece may well have originated as an earlier composition, which Psellos perhaps included in the *Chronographia* because of its literary merit.⁷⁹ The content of the ekphrasis is corroborated by Attaleiates, who presents the harmonious integration of the landscaped features and built environment at the site as a key feature of the redeveloped site.⁸⁰ It is further corroborated by Ruy González de Clavijo's fifteenth-century account, which describes several gardens running up to the walls of St George, and a monumental font outside of the church door. As Henry Maguire observed, Psellos' ekphrasis also matches with the topographical evi-

⁷⁹ Psellos, *Chronographia* (ed. Reinsch), 524-530. The ekphrasis is also structured with repeated short clauses, indicating a connection to an oral performance. It is comparable with several other mid-eleventh-century texts which respond to Constantine's development of the Mangana, including Christopher of Mytilene, *Poem* 95 and John Mauroπος, *Poem* 71 & 72.

⁸⁰ Attaleiates, *History* (ed. Pérez), 36.11-20.

dence of the site, suggesting that it is anchored in reality.⁸¹ The upper terrace of the Mangana is wide enough to accommodate the hanging gardens described by Psellos and the sweeping plain described in the text is still visible on the lower level of the site (figs 2, 4, 5 & 6).⁸²

In the first place, fountains and running water are frequently employed as metaphors for munificence and acts of patronage in eleventh- and twelfth-century Byzantine texts, including as we have seen, in an epigram likely intended for the Mangana.⁸³ Waterworks had also been prominent features at foundations on the Sarayburnu peninsula associated with the ‘Macedonian’ rulers of the ninth and tenth centuries. Panegyric responses to these foundations present them as symbols of munificence.⁸⁴ Outside of Byzantium, water seems to have been used as a symbol for royal generosity in the tenth – twelfth-century palaces of the Fatimid caliphs and the Norman Kings of Sicily.⁸⁵ Written panegyrics used water imagery to present Monomachos as a generous emperor, and this rhetoric must have been affirmed by the visible waterworks at the Mangana.⁸⁶ These features however seem likely to have also symbolised the charity and patronage which Skleraina enacted through the Mangana. I suggest that whilst also acting as a symbol of Monomachos’

⁸¹ Maguire 2000, 261-262.

⁸² It is possible to view the south part of the lower terrace from the first courtyard of the Topkapi Palace, near the entrance to the military base. The northern part can be viewed from a balcony near the Mecidiye Kiosk in the fourth courtyard.

⁸³ For the preponderance of waterworks as metaphors for patronage in eleventh- and twelfth-century texts: Nilsson 2016.

⁸⁴ See the description in the *Vita Basilii* of the *phialai* at the Nea Ekklesia as symbols of Basil I’s munificence: Constantine VII, *Vita Basilii* (ed. Ševčenko), 276-278. Leo Choirosphaktes’ ekphrasis of the Leo VI’s monumental bath may also associate the appearance of the water with a moment in the Brumalia when the empress distributed scarlet cloth to wives of officials: Magdalino 1988, 111. The text is transcribed and translated at *ibid.* 1988, 116-117.

⁸⁵ For example, the tenth-century Fatimid palatial complex al-Mansuriyya (southwest of Qayrawan): Bloom 1985, 28-29, and the Norman Sicilian Zisa palace (built 1154-1166): Tronzo 1997, 42. See, Staacke 1991.

⁸⁶ Psellos, *Oration to the Emperor Monomachos* (n. 2) (ed. Dennis), 18-50, ll. 667-669; Christopher of Mytilene, *Poem* 55. In the twelfth century Constantine Manasses depicts Monomachos’ generosity through elaborate water imagery: Manasses (ed. Lampsides), I, 6161-6165 (tr. Yuretich, *Chronicle*, 244). See, Nilsson 2016, 268.

munificence, the fountains and running water also visualised Skleraina's roles as a renovator of the Mangana and administrator of the site's function as a εὐαγής οἶκος. The appearance of the built and designed landscape may have also crafted Skleraina's reputation in other ways. The two surviving encomiastic texts on Skleraina, written by Psellos and Christopher of Mytilene, both use the noun χάρις to describe her graceful and extrovert deportment.⁸⁷ These texts indicate that descriptions of this personal quality were a focus of panegyric on Skleraina. The reason for this is hinted at in Psellos' funerary poem, where the noun is used most frequently in a section which describes how Skleraina's urbanity and charm were enjoyed by everyone in the imperial court, implying this facilitated her integration into the ruling class.⁸⁸ Here it is also worth noting Angeliki Laiou's assessment of the funeral poem, which she thought presented Monomachos and Skleraina's relationship as founded upon loving affection orientated around mutual moral support (φίλτρον). In this respect the speech differs sharply from the account in Psellos' *Chronographia*, which presents Skleraina and Monomachos' relationship being driven by impulsive lust.⁸⁹ Both of Psellos' contrasting accounts match with themes present in other eleventh and twelfth century texts. On the one hand, marital relationships characterised by a loving affection detached from sexual lust are upheld as ideal.⁹⁰ On

⁸⁷ The personification of grace (εὐχάρις) is described as having fled the earth. Skleraina's death in, Christopher of Mytilene, *Poem 70*, l. 1. Skleraina's χάρις is described at, Psellos, *Verses* (ed. Spadaro), 74.73-74, 74.88, 75.109, 76.134, 79.215.

⁸⁸ Psellos, *Verses* (ed. Spadaro), 73.61-93.

⁸⁹ Psellos, *Chronographia* (ed. Reinsch), 370-374.

⁹⁰ Anna Komnene presents of her mother Eirene Doukaina as a guardian and aide of her father Alexios I in the *Alexiad* (ed. Reinsch), 364-368 (12.3.2-10). George Tornikios' presentation of Anna's relationship with her husband Bryennios is similar: Tornikios (ed. Darrouzès), 261. In the eleventh century, Psellos presents Eirene Pegonitissa and her husband John Doukas as attached and supportive of one another, but sexually restrained: Psellos, *Epitaph for the Kaisarissa Eirene* (ed. Kurtz & Drexler), 163.19-21; 181.26-27, 182.1-2. In the panegyric section of his *Chronographia*, he also celebrates Michael VII's φίλτρον for his wife, Maria of Albania: Psellos, *Chronographia* (ed. Reinsch), 782.11-12. Outside of the ruling class, Psellos presents the relationship between his own mother and father on similar terms: Psellos, *Encomium for his mother Theodote* (tr. Kaldellis), 67-68.

the other hand, sexual passion is often presented as potentially disharmonious and disruptive to the social order.⁹¹ These textual patterns may well be reflective of widespread Byzantine attitudes to marriage. Here it is worth noting that as well as implying charm and grace, the word *χάρις* infers generosity and kindness. It therefore seems likely that this personal quality was emphasised in panegyric on Skleraina to frame the relationship which she shared with Monomachos as one which met Byzantine ideals concerning marriage, and which therefore upheld the social order of the Byzantine ruling class.

In his poem on St George, Christopher of Mytilene uses *χάρις* twice to emphasise the aesthetic qualities of the church.⁹² Psellos' ekphrasis also makes repeated use of the word *χάρις* to describe the harmonious integration of the component features of the Mangana area. This raises the possibility that literary descriptions of the Mangana and panegyric on Skleraina was deliberately paralleled. A link between Skleraina's reputation and the appearance of the built and designed features at the Mangana is also suggested by the opening nine verses of Psellos' funerary poem. This poem was likely delivered in St George.⁹³ The opening of the text describes a storm which has caused disharmony amongst the natural elements, and the speaker then twice appeals to these elements to lament Skleraina. As Panagiotis Agapitos notes, this is unique in Psellos' funerary writings.⁹⁴ These lines possibly refer to the landscaped features surrounding the church of St George. Psellos may be describing how the erstwhile harmony and tranquillity visualised by the integration of the

⁹¹ For Zoe's destructive passion for Michael IV: Psellos, *Chronographia* (ed. Reinsch), 148-166. See also the twelfth-century novels of Makrembolites, *Hysmine and Hysminias*, ed. Marcovich (tr. Jeffreys, 177-269), and Eugenianos, *Drosilla and Charikles* (ed. Conca), 305-497 (tr. Jeffreys, 351-458). See further, Laiou, 1992, 98-104; Magdalino 1992.

⁹² Christopher of Mytilene, *Poem 95*, ll. 7, 10.

⁹³ The heading of this poem describes it as delivered at Skleraina's tomb. The poem may well have been delivered on a formal occasion at the tomb because the acoustic metrics of the poem suggest an oral performance: Agapitos 2008, 563-568. The poem also addresses a large, gathered audience, including Monomachos and the empresses Zoe and Theodora. Such a gathering would have been possible in St George.

⁹⁴ Agapitos 2008, 561.

buildings and landscape features at the Mangana has been disrupted by Skleraina's death. This would indicate that during Skleraina's lifetime, the harmonious appearance of the site had visualised Skleraina's χάρις.⁹⁵ Moreover, I suggest that this imagery would have provided visual reassurance that the joint-patrons of the site, Skleraina and Monomachos, shared a harmonious relationship, which would uphold the established order of the Byzantine Empire. If this is the case, Psellos' reference to the natural elements at the start of the *Verses* would have helped to develop his overall presentation of Monomachos and Skleraina's relationship as comparable to an ideal marriage.

The image of the harmonious integration of the built and designed landscape at the Mangana would have countered the main criticisms of Skleraina and Monomachos' relationship. Skylitzes attests that critics focused upon Skleraina's violation of Christian teachings on marriage and the possibility that she was a threat to the lives of the empresses Zoe and Theodora. Skleraina and Monomachos' lack of a legitimising marriage tie, and the adulterous status of their relationship after Monomachos married Zoe, must have encouraged Byzantine audiences to perceive that theirs was a lustful relationship, which threatened the established social order. This criticism must however have been predictable, and it is likely the couple would have anticipated it from the time Skleraina arrived in Constantinople. From the outset of the development of the site, the Mangana's appearance may then have been designed in part to present an image of harmony and *philtron*, to counter expected criticisms of Skleraina and Monomachos' relationship.

Both Skylitzes and Psellos show that complaints against Skleraina were expressed by members of the court, and at least a portion of the Constantinopolitan populace. An interpolation to Skylitzes' *Synopsis* adds that the widespread criticism of Skleraina was led by a monastic leader, Niketas Stethatos. The interpolator was possibly Bulgarian, suggesting that Skleraina's controversial reputation extended beyond Constantinople.⁹⁶ Again, especially given the recent uprising against

⁹⁵ For literary representations of middle-Byzantine gardens as places and symbols of order, harmony and safety: Nilsson 2013, 15-20.

⁹⁶ See above, n. 35.

Michael V, it is likely that Skleraina and Monomachos would have anticipated that criticism of their relationship would be voiced by groups across the Byzantine social order. The appearance of the built and designed environment at the Mangana may have been intended to communicate propaganda which could reach different audiences. On the one hand, literary descriptions of the site, either performed orally or circulated in manuscript form, were probably received by members of the imperial court and the social circles surrounding them.⁹⁷ However, we should also consider the importance of moments when viewers directly looked at the site. These occasions may also have influenced Skleraina's reputation amongst the imperial court, as well as wider audiences. As in the modern day, in the mid-eleventh century a view of the Mangana as a coherent whole would have only been possible from the sea (fig. 3). If the appearance of the integration of the component parts of the Mangana, as well as the position of the site within the cityscape, communicated a symbolic message, this would have been best received by audiences aboard ships on the Bosphorus.⁹⁸

There is in fact written evidence for an occasion when eleventh-century audiences would have looked at the Mangana from the sea. Attaleiates describes a conspiracy enacted when Constantine X Doukas attended a festival at the Mangana on the feast day of St George on April 23rd 1061, 'according to prescriptions established by Monomachos' (ὡς ἦν ἀπὸ τοῦ Μονομάχου τεθεσπισμένον). Attaleiates implies that the conspirators anticipated that Doukas would leave by sea. His account also describes multiple ships docked at the Mangana, possibly at the monumental seaward gates identified by Zulueta (fig. 7).⁹⁹ This indicates that the celebration was attended by multiple imperial courtiers who had arrived by ship. Thus, it appears that Monomachos had established an

⁹⁷ For the sharing of manuscripts and collective reading of poetry in eleventh-century social circles: Bernard 2014, 98-101.

⁹⁸ Notably, an anonymous eleventh-century poem focuses on the designed landscape of Constantinople whilst describing a voyage through the Bosphorus: Sola 1916, 20-21.

⁹⁹ Attaleiates, *History* (ed. Pérez), 54-56. His account is corroborated by Skylitzes, who asserts that the emperor did expect to leave the Mangana by boat: Skylitzes, *Continuation* (ed. Tsolakakis), 111.22-24.

annual celebration of the feast of St George at the Mangana involving the gathered imperial court. The ships described by Attaleiates were likely used from Monomachos' reign because this was a convenient way to move the court as the Boukoleon harbour was close to the imperial living quarters.¹⁰⁰ Thus, it is probable that the imperial court approached the Mangana from the sea from the first occasion that Monomachos established a celebration of the feast day of St George at the site.

The celebrations described by Attaleiates would not likely have been introduced until the inauguration of St George, after Skleraina's death. Yet, from an early stage in the development of the Mangana, this occasion may have been anticipated as an important moment when a gathered audience experienced a view of the entire site from the sea.¹⁰¹ The moment when the imperial court arrived at the Mangana to celebrate the feast of St George may have thus been planned as an occasion when the integrated built and designed landscape at the Mangana could be presented as a symbol for Skleraina and Monomachos, to an audience of Byzantine courtiers.

There was also a high volume of sea traffic passing the site of the Mangana in the mid-eleventh century. These included fishing boats and ships carrying edible provisions and fuel to Constantinople. These ships also carried travellers to and from Constantinople.¹⁰² When docking at other ports, both within and outside the borders of the Byzantine Empire, these travellers were sometimes interviewed for information on the city.¹⁰³ Descriptions of the appearance of the Mangana area on the

¹⁰⁰ I am grateful to an anonymous reviewer for this point.

¹⁰¹ For a comparative development of ceremonial occasions in the 1120s connected to the newly constructed Pantokrator monastery: Jeffreys 2019, 113.

¹⁰² In 1204 Gunther of Paris was told that the local Greeks operated some 1600 fishing boats: Jacoby 2017, 632. Using written sources, Johannes Koder estimated that between 330 and 720 ships per year arrived at Constantinople to provide provisions: Koder 2002, 124. For travellers aboard ships: Pryor 2008, 486.

¹⁰³ An example is provided by a passage in the *Chronicle* of the twelfth century Arabic traveller Ibn Jubayr. He describes how he was interviewed by William II's commissioner for information on Constantinople, when he landed in Norman Sicily, and how Genoese travellers had previously given information to the king: Ibn Jubayr, *Chronicle* (tr. Broadhurst), 374-376.

seaward side of the eastern peninsula of Constantinople may in this way have been disseminated by travellers, both within Byzantine territory and further afield. Monomachos and Skleraina's patronage of Galeision attests to their concern to craft a public image of their relationship amongst an Empire-wide audience. However, there is no evidence that Skleraina's image was displayed on coins, which would have provided an effective means of displaying her image beyond Constantinople. The view of the Mangana from the sea may then have served as an alternative means of disseminating a physical image of Skleraina, and her relationship with Monomachos, across the Byzantine Empire.

Crafting a public image through the Mangana

Hitherto, Skleraina's connection to the Mangana area has been understood primarily as an economic arrangement. However, written, material and topographical evidence all suggests that the site was mainly significant to her as a resource for substantiating her contested imperial status and for crafting a public image of her relationship with Monomachos. Psellos writes that Skleraina hoped for imperial status before Monomachos was acclaimed emperor in June 1042.¹⁰⁴ Her likely residence near the Mangana from the moment of her return to Constantinople suggests that she and Monomachos had by now already planned to use the site to develop Skleraina's reputation. It seems that Skleraina and Monomachos planned for her to be integrated into the imperial family from at least 1042 and that they anticipated that this would provoke criticism. The Mangana was very likely planned as a symbol of Monomachos' own status. Yet, it seems to have also been designed as a resource for Skleraina and Monomachos to counter expected criticism of the relationship they shared, and of Skleraina's position within the imperial family. Skleraina's activities at the site were arranged to place herself and Monomachos within a tradition of imperial co-founders and joint patrons, whilst also developing Skleraina's personal reputation for munificence. The built and designed environment also carried implications which seem to have been intended to emphasise Skleraina's involve-

¹⁰⁴ Psellos, *Chronographia* (Reinsch), 364.

ment with the site alongside Monomachos, and to visualise the virtues of their relationship.

Syklitzes' account of the 1044 uprising, and the later interpolation, indicate that Skleraina's association with the Mangana did not work to encourage a consensus of approval of her relationship with Monomachos, or her imperial status. However, when writing the *Life of St Lazaros of Galesion* after 1057, Gregory the Cellarer was keen to emphasise Skleraina and Monomachos' shared connections with his religious community. This suggests that Skleraina's enactment of charity through the Mangana had generated at least pockets of support in Byzantine society. Her connections to the Mangana might have been more fruitful in the long run, if she had not died prematurely before the inauguration of the church. Nonetheless, Skleraina maintained a strong posthumous connection with the site, substantiated by her monumental tomb in St George. Monomachos' decision to be buried there, rather than next to his wife Zoe, was perhaps intended to persuade subsequent generations to remember himself and Skleraina as a legitimate imperial couple.

This article began with the supposition that an analysis of a wide-ranging source material would yield evidence for an imperial partnership which is obscured in literary sources. This approach has shed light on connections between Skleraina, Monomachos and the Mangana, which provides an unusual case study for the motives of imperial patrons. It also demonstrates how in the middle-Byzantine period, the reputation of imperial persons, and especially imperial couples, could be enhanced by joining patronage of a specific area with both literary and physical imagery.

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Maria, Monomachos and the Mangana: Imperial Legitimacy (1042-1046)



Figure 1: Constantinople in the Byzantine Period. Map by Wikicommons user Cplakidas. Licensed according to the licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported license. Universal Public Domain Dedication.



Figure 2: *The Sarayburnu Promontory, Istanbul. Map by Henk Huig, 2020. 1. Gülhane Park 2. Column of the Goths 3. Northern point of Mangana 4. Approximate area of the Kynegion 5. Church and monastery of St George 6. Mangana Palace 7. Possible sea gates 8. Mangana terraced wall 9. Mangana cistern 10. Southernmost Mangana cistern. 11. Southwestern tip of Mangana. 12. Topkapi Palace 13. St Eirene.*



Figure 3: *The sea view of the Mangana, partially obscured by the China Triumph. The site runs from the northern point of the Topkapi Palace (right), to the area to below the Palace's first courtyard (left). Photograph taken by Emma Hui, 2020.*



Figure 4: *The south-west corner of the Mangana, looking across the upper terrace north-east. Photograph taken by Emma Huig, 2020.*



Figure 5: *The centre of the Mangana, looking south-east towards the lower plain below. Photograph taken by Emma Huig 2020.*



Figure 6: The north of the Mangana, looking north-east. Possible location of Skleraina's Kynegion residence. Photograph taken by Emma Huig, 2020.



Figure 7: Possible Mangana Sea Gates. Photograph taken by Emma Huig, 2020.



Figure 8: Constantine IX Monomachos and Zoe donor mosaic, St Sophia, Istanbul. Photograph taken by Emma Huig, 2020.