Exposing Pig Butchering Scam

written by Mert SARICA | 1 March 2023

Over the years, as I have been targeted sometimes directly (LinkedIn Scammers, Sponsored Scamming) and sometimes indirectly (Who Viewed My Profile?) by scammers, I have made it my duty to write about these attempts in blog posts and warn those around me about them. At times, I have even received messages about scams from my spouse, friends, and close ones and have tried to write about them (Instagram Scammers) whenever I get the chance. And now, I am here again with a new scam attempt to expose.

As I announced through my Twitter account in June 2022, this attempt started with a message from a protected Twitter account named Anna on June 14, 2022. In this message, Anna started the conversation by talking about how she hasn't seen me in a long time. After learning my name (Mark *fake*), where I live (a Belgian living in Turkey *fake*), and what I do (CFO of a FinTech company *fake*), the topic shifted to where I invest my money and the loss of value of Bitcoin cryptocurrency at that time.





Anna @Anna09339609

Investment, one of the founders of import and export trading company, photography enthusiast, travel is the truth of finding soul.

100 Following **19** Followers

Joined February 2022



Hello, long time no see

Jun 14, 2022, 5:06 AM

You accepted the request

Hello

Jun 14, 2022, 11:50 AM 🗸



My friend, what are your plans for today?

Jun 14, 2022, 5:54 PM

Training.

Jun 14, 2022, 6:11 PM 🗸



What kind of training do you do? What's it about?

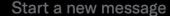
Jun 14, 2022, 7:03 PM

Walking on the treadmill

Jun 14, 2022, 7:09 PM 🗸



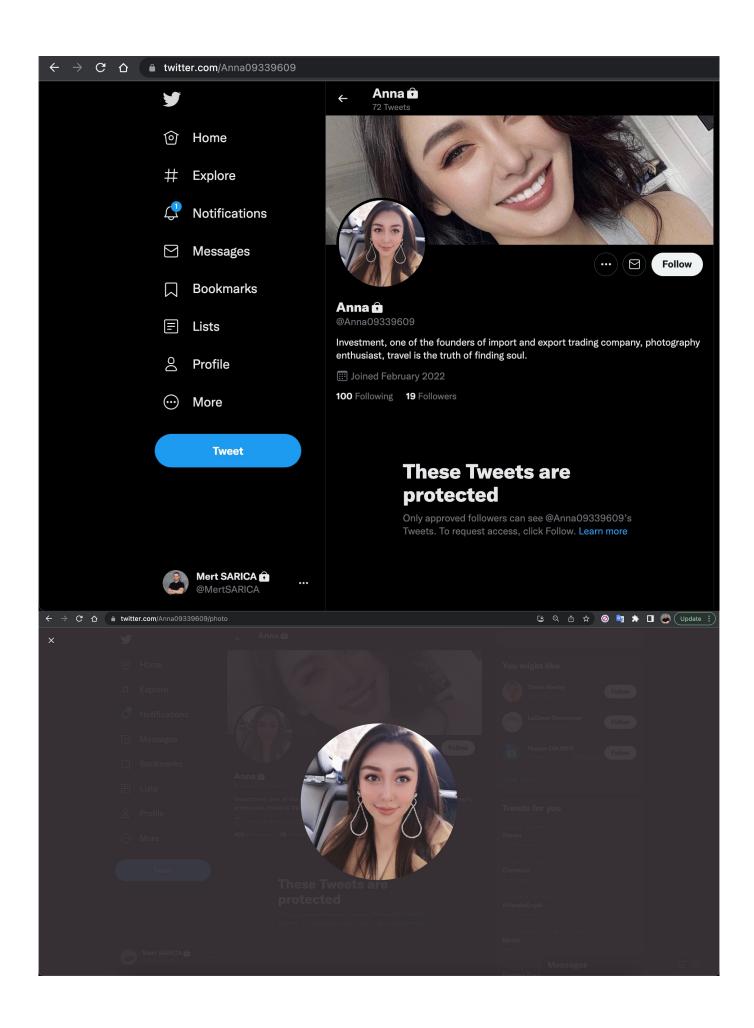


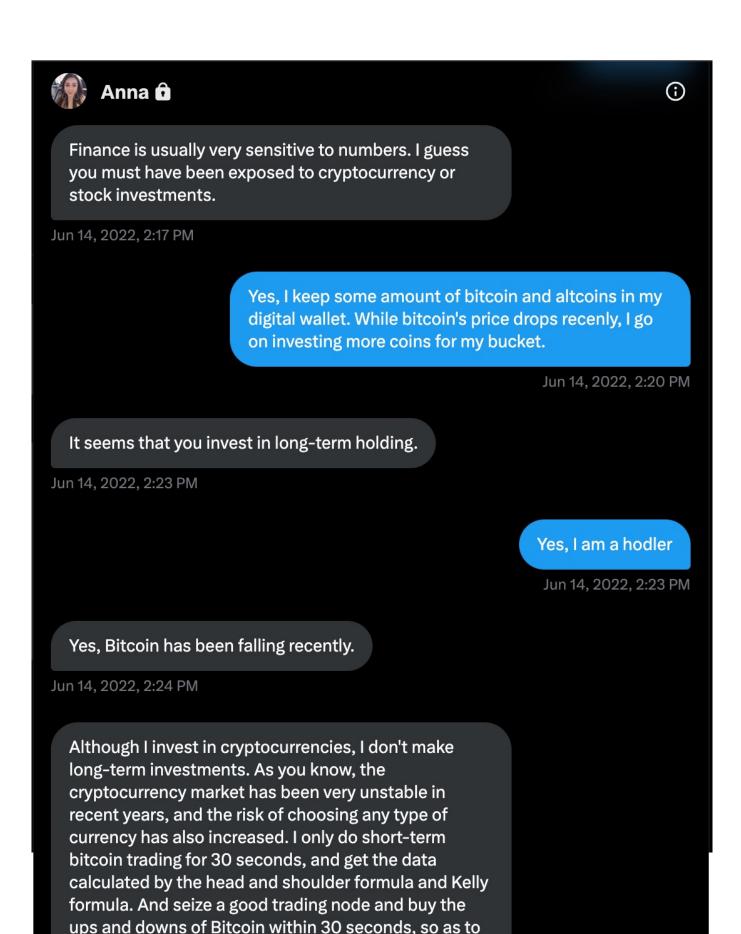










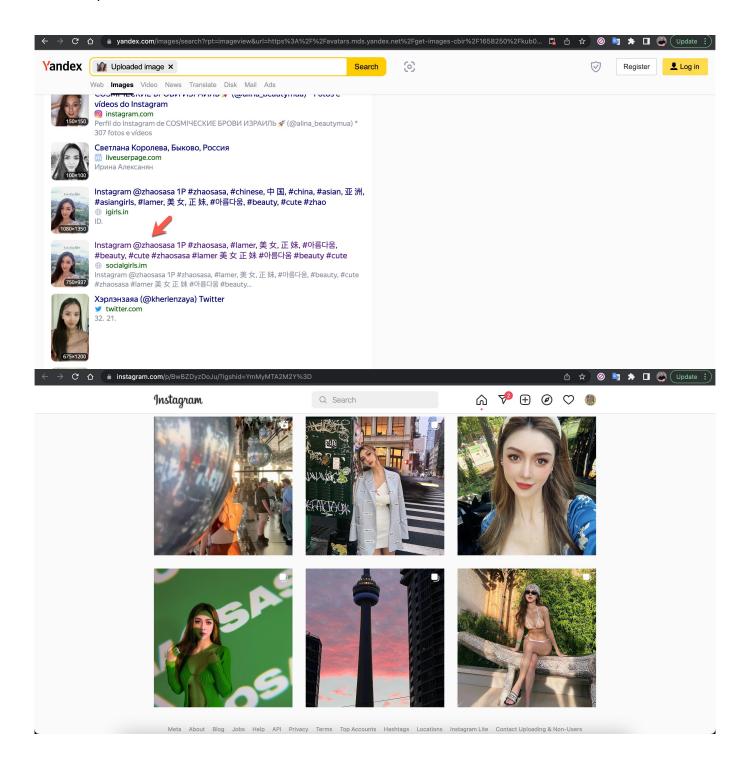


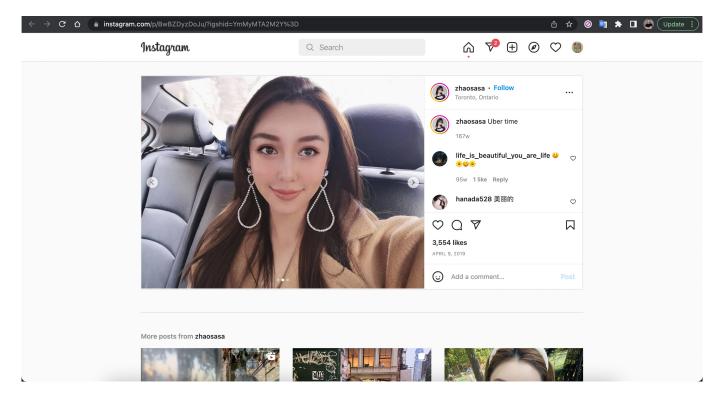
Jun 14, 2022, 2:26 PM

obtain a stable profit.

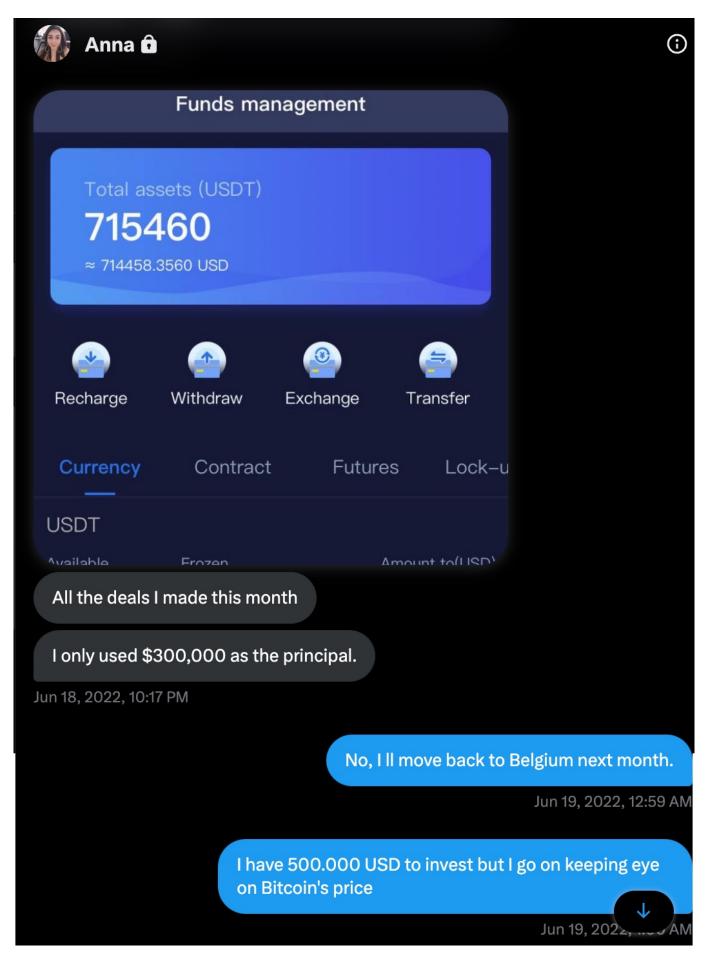


Anna's profile really belonged to, as I suspected it was fake. To do this, I used the Visual Search feature of the Yandex search engine and discovered that the profile photo belonged to a Chinese person named Shasha Zhao. When I looked at the photos shared on Shasha's profile, I found the exact photo on Anna's profile.



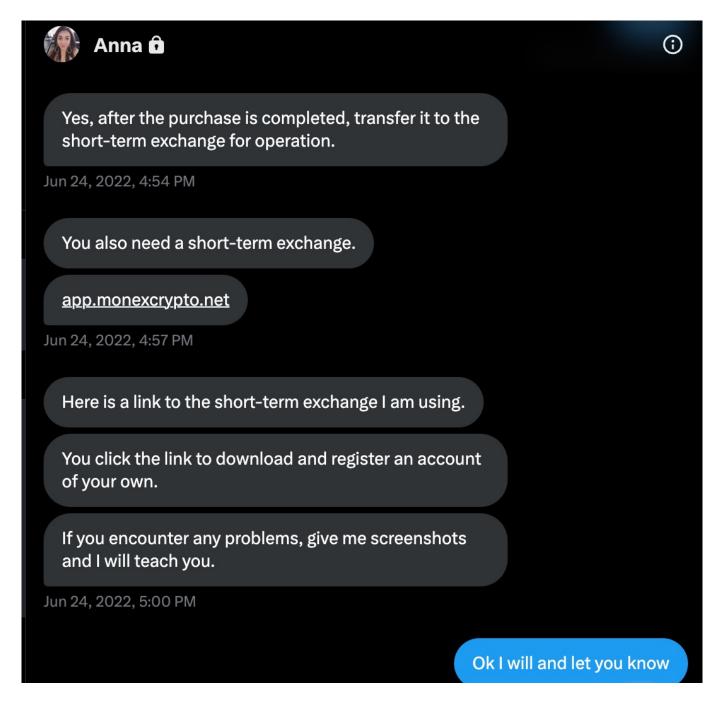


Anna, who initially claimed to live in Singapore and founder of a garment import and export trading company, asked to continue the conversation on WhatsApp and shared a US phone number (+19295654212) with me. When I questioned her about using a US phone number, she changed her story, saying she lived in the US for business reasons. To pique my interest, she then claimed to have made a profit of around \$715,000 from a crypto investment of \$300,000. I informed her that I was considering investing \$500,000 to see her tactics for quickly making a profit.



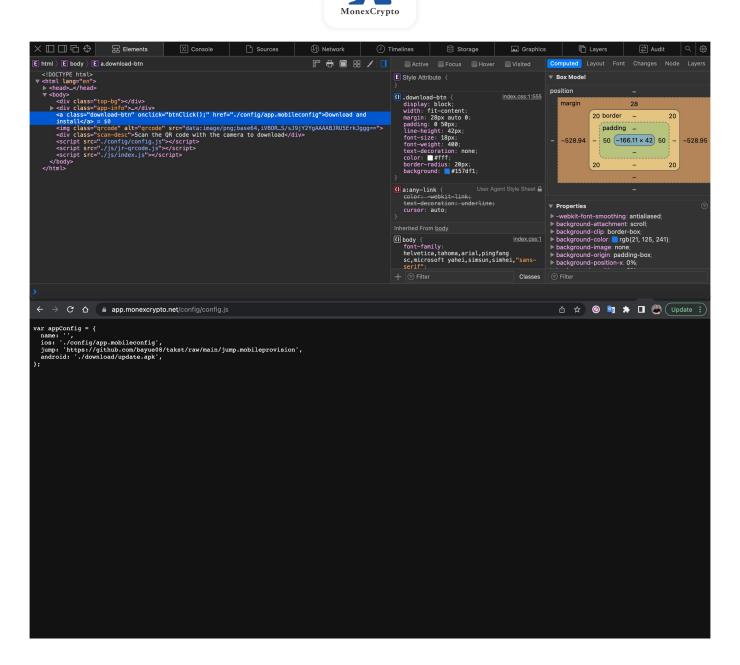
After sharing that I consider her to be a very good investor and want to invest with her, she told me that I need to enter the MonexCrypto platform

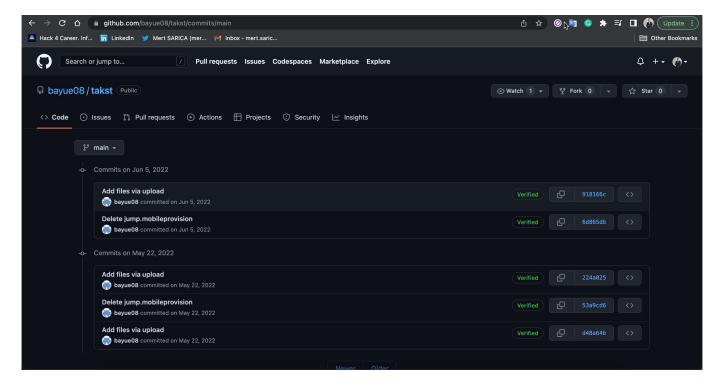
for short-term investments. She also shared that I need to visit the https://app[.]monexcrypto[.]net address, download the mobile application, and register.



I went to the website to download the mobile application and when I looked at the source code of the webpage, I found out that there was both an Android (update.apk) and an iOS version of the app. After uploading the Android app to VirusTotal and Pithus, a mobile threat intelligence platform, and quickly checking the somewhat suspicious results, I decided to thoroughly examine the version developed for the iOS operating system.







After seeing that the mobileprovision file, which enables third-party applications to run on the iOS operating system, is stored on GitHub, I viewed the information about the developer/company (QuanLi Network Technology Co., Ltd. (SRD7J8LLBV)) registered in the Apple Developer Program.



wql220604

Expired 7 months ago

App ID Name: iosplayer

App ID: SRD7J8LLBV.com.weiquanli.iosplayer

Team: QuanLi Network Technology Co., Ltd. (SRD7J8LLBV)

Platform:

f464148a-77ac-4a72-a15e-f1ed214212f8 UUID:

Provisions All Devices: Yes

Creation Date: Jun 4, 2021 at 03:02:28 EDT

Expiration Date: Jun 4, 2022 at 03:02:28 EDT

ENTITLEMENTS

keychain-access-groups: SRD7J8LLBV.*, com.apple.token

com.apple.external-accessory.wireless-

configuration:

com.apple.developer.healthkit.access: health-records SRD7J8LLBV.*

com.apple.developer.ubiquitycontainer-identifiers:

> get-task-allow: false

com.apple.developer.default-data-NSFileProtectionComplete

protection:

com.apple.developer.healthkit: true

com.apple.developer.associated-

domains:

com.apple.developer.team-identifier:

com.apple.security.application-groups:

application-identifier:

com.apple.developer.ubiquity-kvstore-

identifier:

com.apple.developer.homekit: true

SRD7J8LLBV

Unknown

SRD7J8LLBV.com.weiquanli.iosplayer

SRD7J8LLBV.*

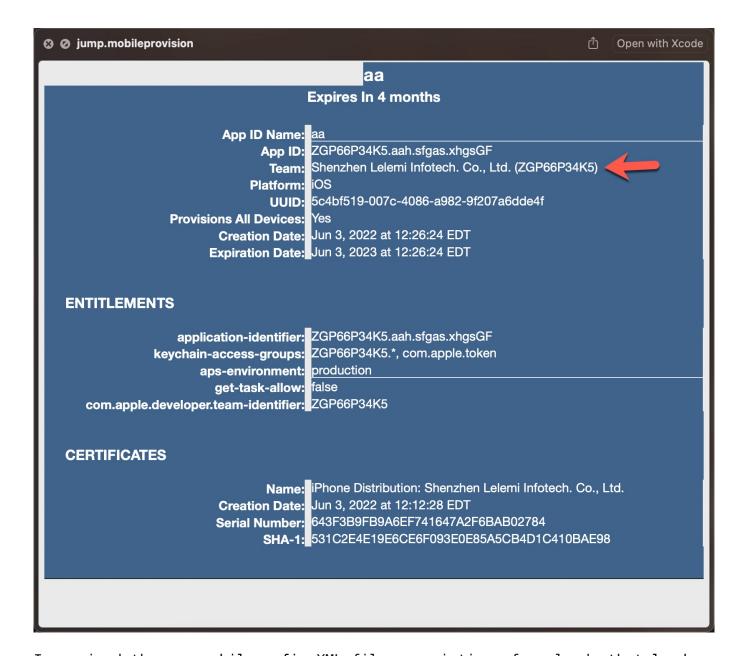
CERTIFICATES

Name: iPhone Distribution: QuanLi Network Technology Co., Ltd.

Creation Date: Apr 9, 2020 at 10:39:23 EDT

Serial Number: 04F4A485C1B2F933

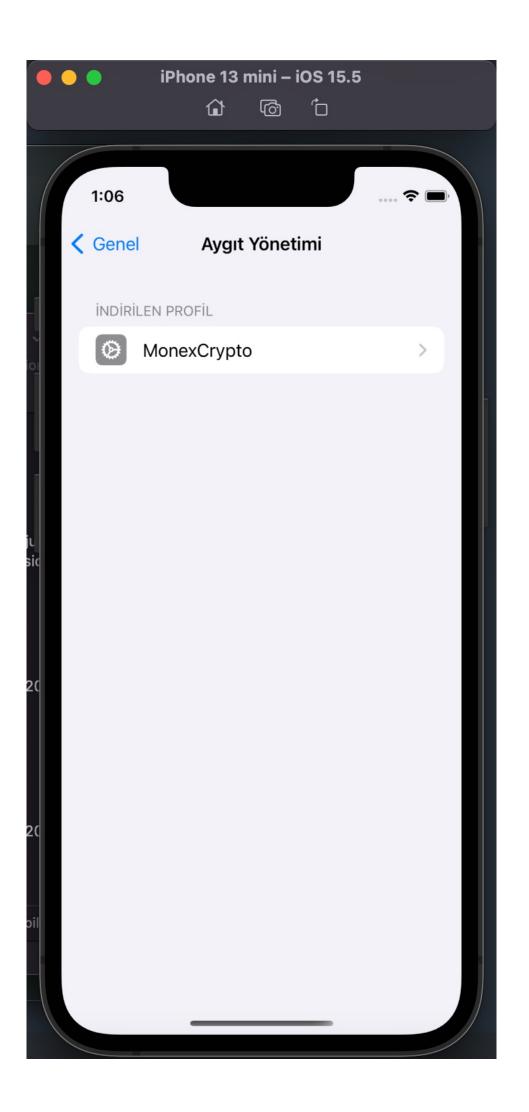
SHA-1: F4AD79B2285828A32B124AC7EB4D664013F8CCC5



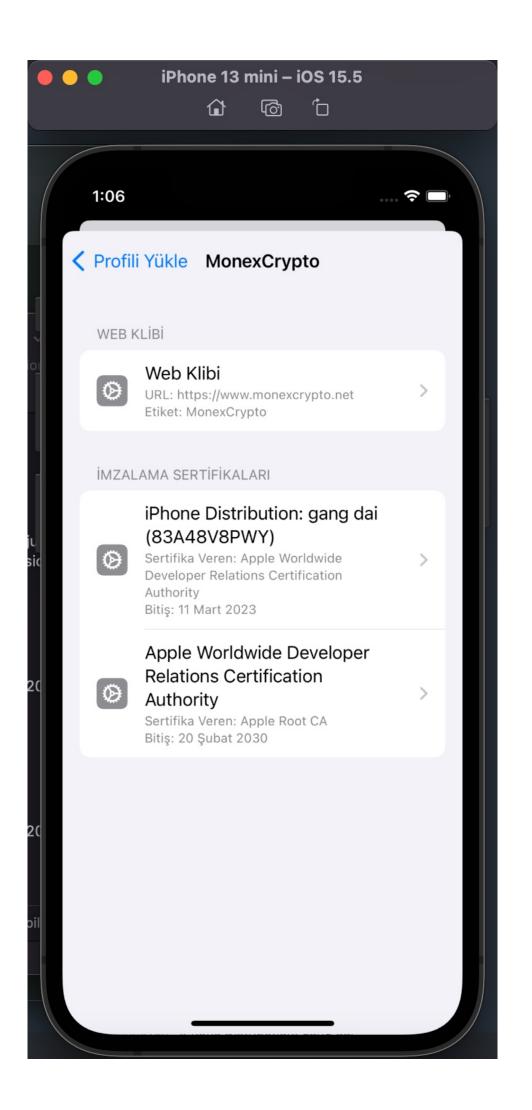
I examined the app.mobileconfig XML file, consisting of payloads that load settings and authorization information onto Apple devices. When I ran the file in the Simulator application located in Xcode, I learned that it is a Web Clip (WebClip) that opens the https://www.monexcrypto.net web page and is signed by a developer named Gang Dai.

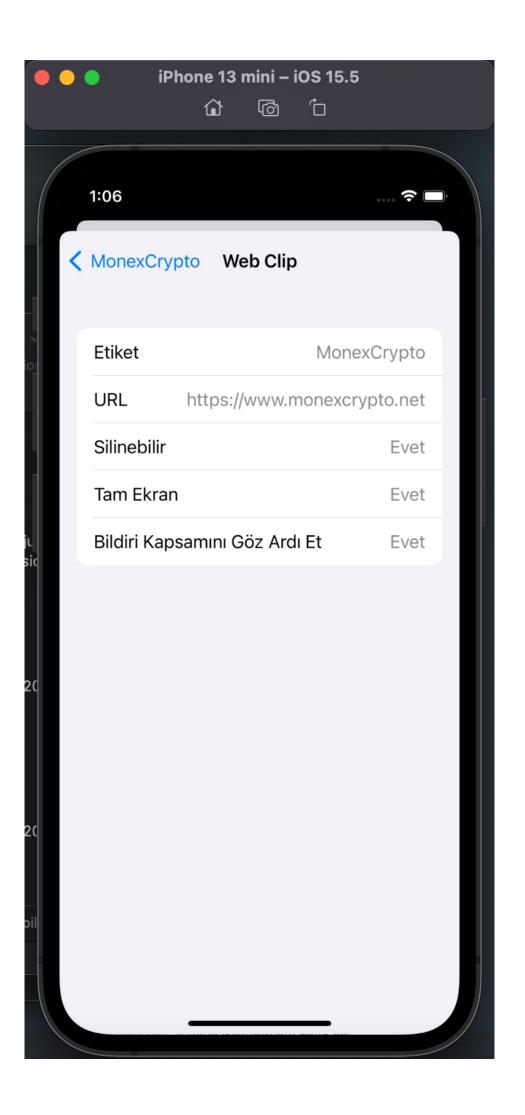
Web clips: A web clip is an icon on the device Home screen that links to a website or URL. Web clips can optionally launch full-screen web apps and can run offline using HTML5 local storage. Configuration profiles can include web clips that use a custom title and icon, and can optionally be nonremovable. Web clips can point students to specific websites for educational purposes. For more information about configuring web clips on a device, see WebClip profile page in Apple Developer documentation.

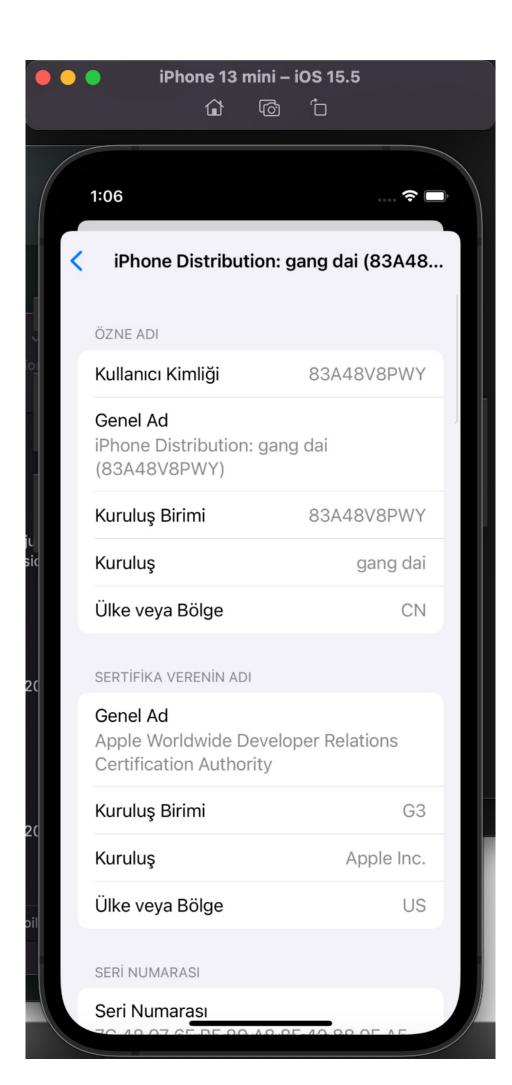


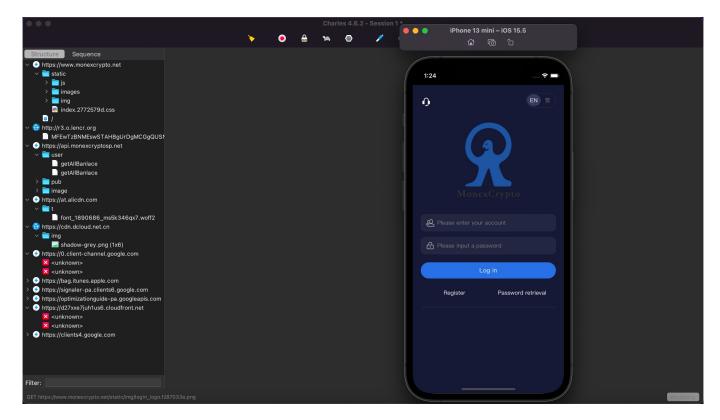




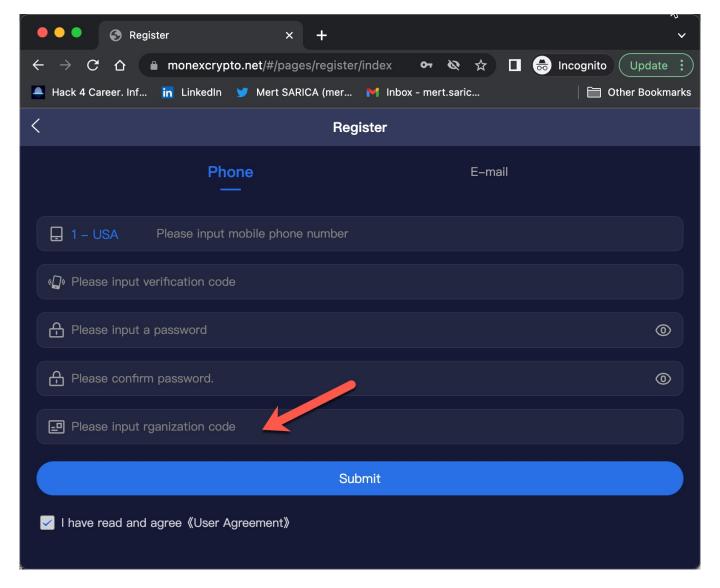




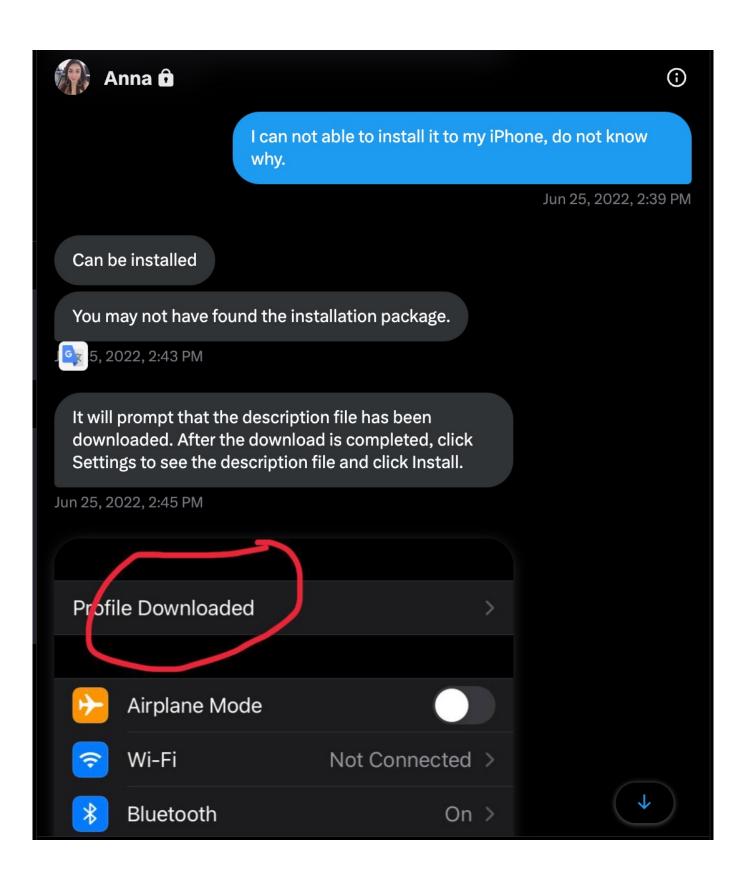




When I tried to register on the website, I was expected to enter an Organization Code in the registration form. The purpose of placing such a code in the form by scammers was probably to prevent cyber security researchers and/or cyber security vendors from detecting this page and collecting information, and they had been successful until now. Whenever I told Anna that I was having issues in the app installation, she kindly did everything she could to help me with screenshots. So I decided to ask Anna for help one more time in finding out the organization code. :)



When I asked her the organization code, she first wrote Chinese words (probably she was communicating with me using a Chinese-English translation service), then she shared with me the code (768919) that I needed to enter into the form.







I have installed it.

Jun 26, 2022, 6:21 AM



I can not able to register as it asks me an organization code which I have no idea what it is

Jun 26, 2022, 7:18 AM



💁 我找找我之前用的你可不可以用

Jun 26, 2022, 4:36 PM

Try the 768919 I used.

Jun 26, 2022, 4:39 PM



This is the organization code I used.

You try

Jun 26, 2022, 4:40 PM

It worked. Now what is next?:)

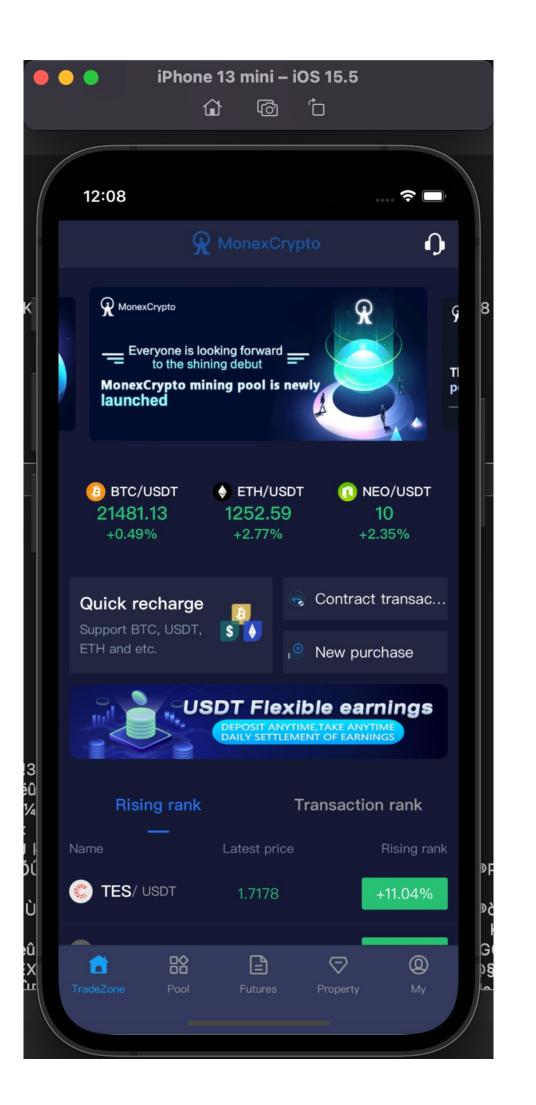
Jun 27, 2022, 12:37 AM



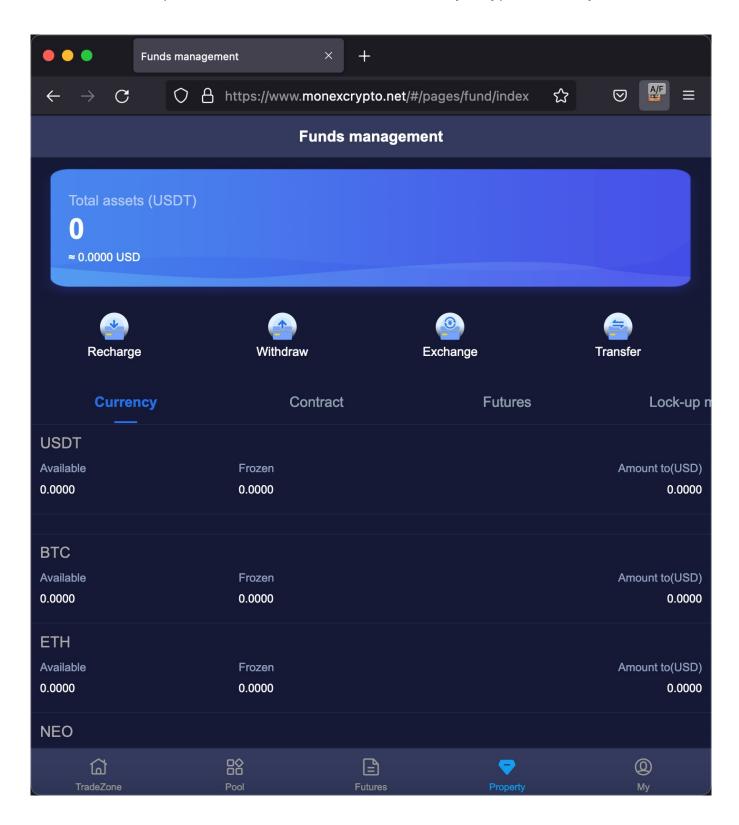
Next, buy and transfer.

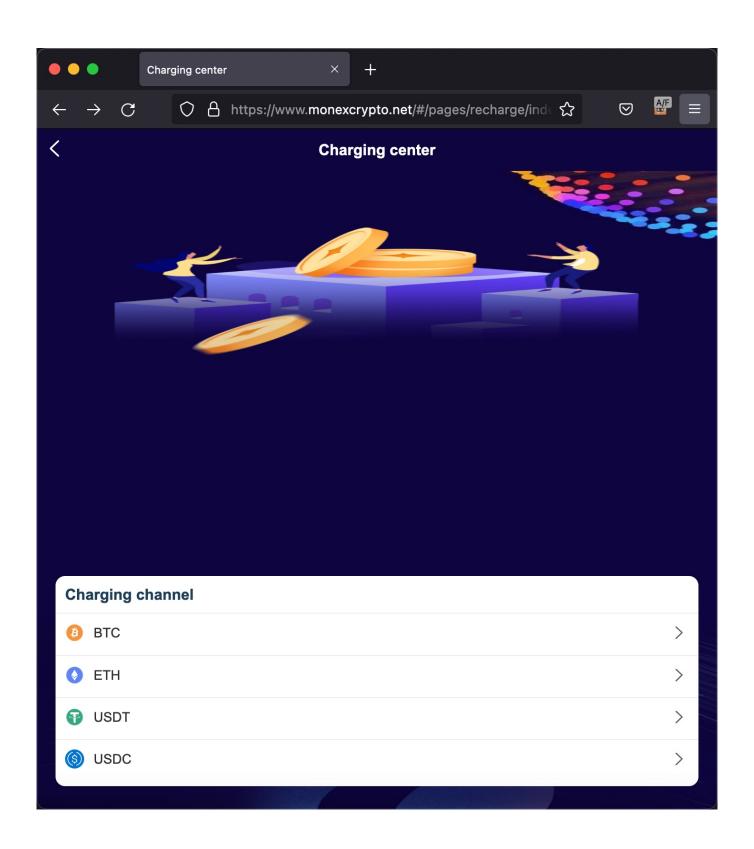


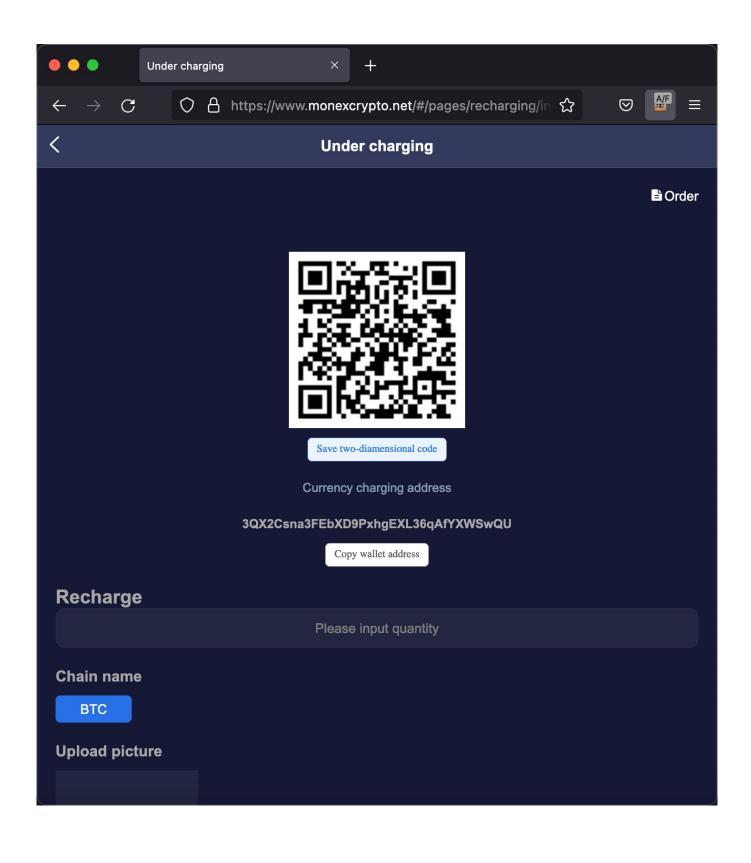
When I successfully registered and started browsing the website with Web Clip, I saw pages and menus about real-time market tracking, depositing money into the wallet, withdrawal, etc.

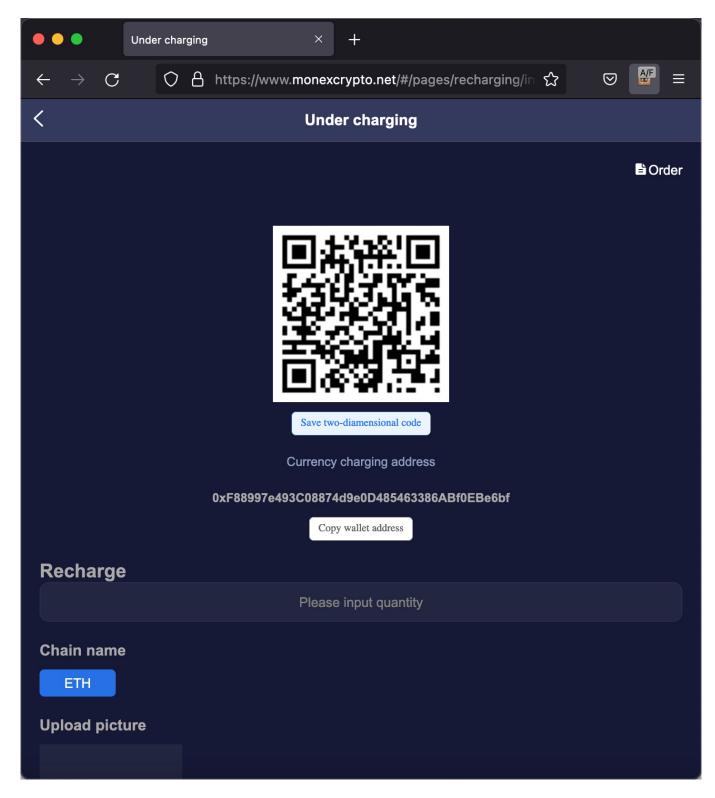


Later, I visited the Recharge page, which I thought could be the ideal place for scammers to trap their victims, as the page for depositing and withdrawing cryptocurrency. Like other exchanges and platforms, when I visited, I was presented with the addresses of my cryptocurrency wallets.









On June 28, 2022, Anna realized she was very close to scamming me, began directing me on how to send cryptocurrency (USDT) via a cryptocurrency exchange named Binance to my wallet.



①

If you are herebinancelf you have coins, you don't need to buy them. You just need to convert them into USDT and transfer them.

Jun 28, 2022, 12:43 PM

Direct purchase is also possible, but then it needs to be purchased by wire transfer. The minimum purchase amount is \$3,000, and it will be more convenient to purchase and transfer with the traditional exchange.

I usually do the same thing, and then transfer back to the traditional exchange after the transaction.

Jun 28, 2022, 12:49 PM

Where is my USDT wallet address I cant find it.

Jun 28, 2022, 1:31 PM

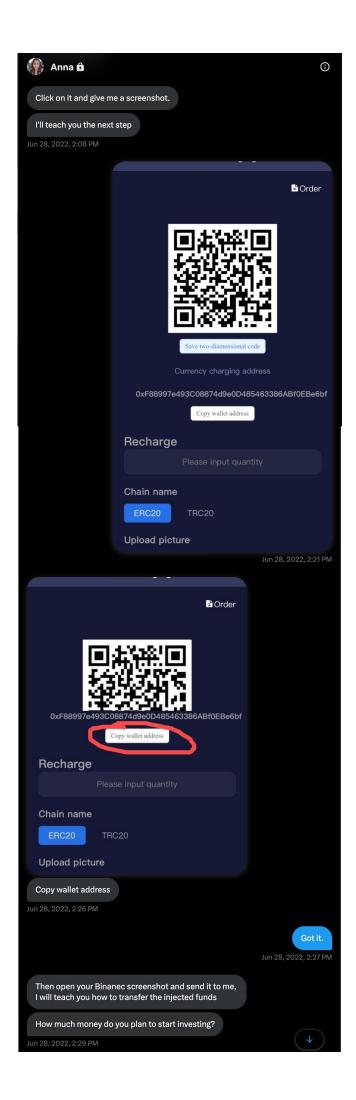
Give me a screenshot.

I'll show you how to find him.

Jun 28, 2022, 1:45 PM

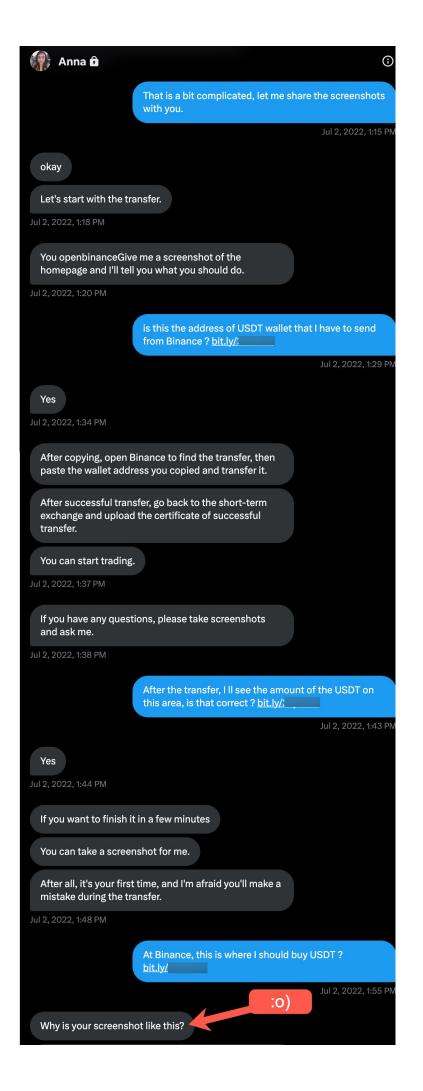
Just give me the screenshot of the main page of the exchange.

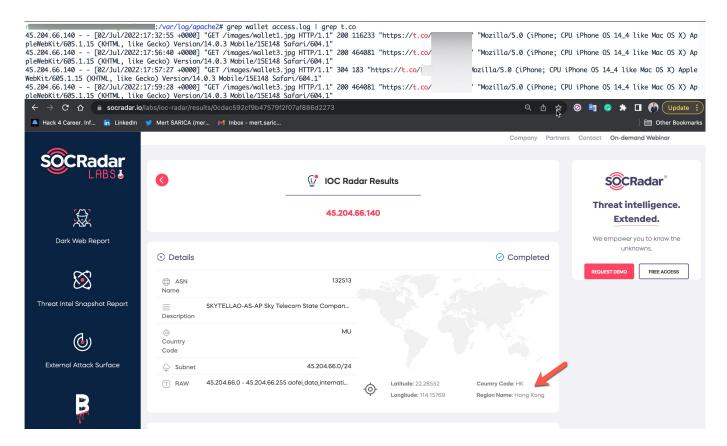




As I began to wonder which country Anna was really communicating with me from, I started to think about what I could do to find out Anna's IP address. I guessed that Anna, who had never suspected me despite the éCyber Security Researcher" background image on my Twitter profile, continued to carry on her plan to trap me for 15 days, had no concern about Operations Security (OPSEC). For this reason, I decided to share the web addresses of the screenshots I hosted on my website with Anna by using the Bitly URL shortening service in order to obtain her IP address.

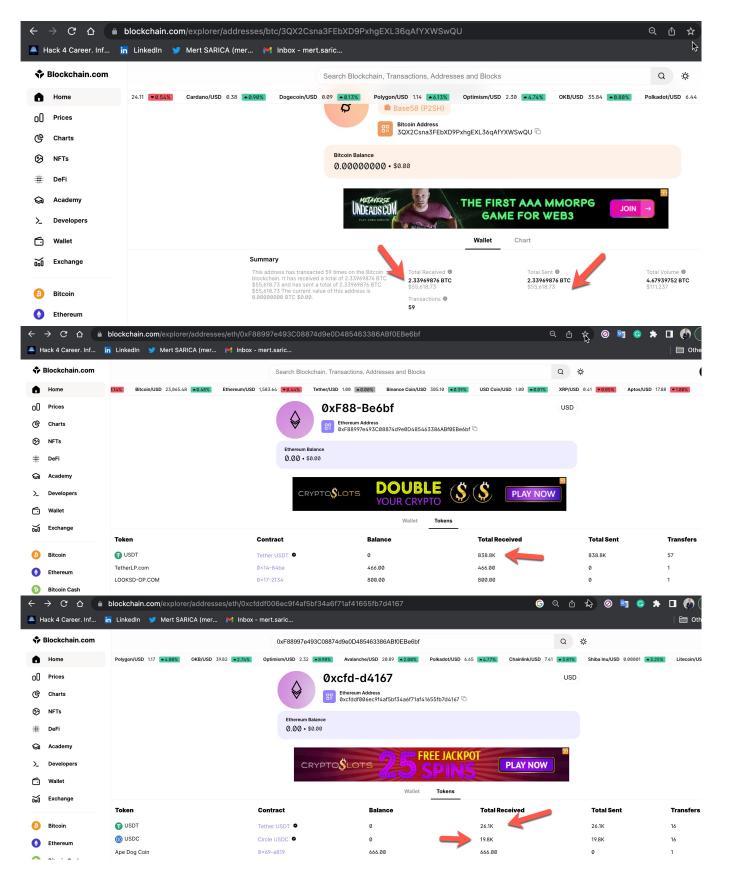
Because Anna did not hesitate to click on the three bit.ly addresses I shared, with the help of the SOCRadar's IOC Radar I learned that she was communicating with me from the 45.204.66.140 IP address located in Hong Kong.





As I continued to browse the MonexCrypto website, I decided to check if the Bitcoin and Ethereum cryptocurrency wallet addresses were unique to me or same for everyone who joined the platform. If these wallet addresses belong to scammers and they show their own addresses as wallet addresses to each person who joins the platform (victim), they can easily steal the cryptocurrency from their victims with ease. Based on the research I conducted on this matter, I discovered that;

- On June 28, 2022, when I checked my Bitcoin wallet address
 (3QX2Csna3FEbXD9PxhgEXL36qAfYXWSwQU) on the Blockchain.com website, it was
 seen that this wallet was created on June 6, 2022 and until September 29,
 2022, \$55,618.73 worth of Bitcoin was transferred to this wallet and then
 withdrawn.
- 2. On the same date, when I checked my Ethereum wallet address (0xF88997e493C08874d9e0D485463386ABf0EBe6bf) at the same place, it was seen that this wallet was also created on June 26, 2022 and until November 23, 2022, ~\$839.000 worth of Ethereum and USDT was transferred to this wallet.
- 3. Again, on the same date, this time checking my USDC wallet address (0xcfddf006ec9f4af5bf34a6f71af41655fb7d4167), it was seen that this wallet was created on June 17, 2022 and until August 16, 2022, ~\$46.000 worth of Ethereum and USDT was transferred to this wallet.



Disclaimer: I would like to remind that I am not an IRS agent or a Blockchain expert capable of tracing end-to-end cryptocurrency transfers as described in the book Tracers in the Dark: The Global Hunt for the Crime Lords of Cryptocurrency in case of any errors. :)

From the date I registered on the MonexCrypto website, June 26, 2022, to January 29, 2023, I roughly checked my wallet addresses 5 times by logging into the MonexCrypto website, and I noticed that they changed every time. Based on this information, the wallet addresses were not individually produced, but were the scammers' own wallet addresses, and they changed these addresses at certain intervals. When I listed and gathered the wallet addresses and the money transfers made to these wallets, I realized that the scammers had stolen approximately 3 million dollars worth of cryptocurrency, to the best of my estimation.

А	В	С
Blockchain Type	Wallet Address	~Stolen Amount (USD)
Bitcoin	3QX2Csna3FEbXD9PxhgEXL36qAfYXWSwQU	\$55,618.73
Ethereum	0xF88997e493C08874d9e0D485463386ABf0EBe6bf	\$818,800.00
Ethereum	0xCFDDF006EC9F4AF5BF34A6F71AF41655FB7D4167	\$46,000.00
Ethereum	0x392667b0CDf9B04Ce5C48754Ea4185056A65DD31	\$246,000.00
Ethereum	0x66FD1C86ae25BDd278bb90f1174f668392EBB540	\$675,000.00
Ethereum	0xA9434DFb0fa3f29fc6324AA60DB377C863022f13	\$204,000.00
Ethereum	0xC495928233A6E4433c151B7A552e34A3d7Af54D7	\$564,000.00
Ethereum	0xaE7A6F74c09BDB3E1e17e51040C070A65ACf7859	\$134,000.00
	Total Stolen Amount (USD)	\$2,743,418.73

Of course, while I was trying to unmask Anna on July 18th, 2022, the FBI issued a warning against fraudulent attempts made through fake crypto exchanges/investment applications like MonexCrypto. According to this warning, approximately 42.7 million dollars worth of crypto had been stolen from 244 people worldwide. I had already learned how 3 million dollars were stolen. :)

In 2021, the FBI's Internet Crime Complaint Center received more than 4,300 submissions related to pig butchering scams, totaling more than \$429 million in losses. And at the end of November, the US Department of Justice announced that it had seized seven domain names used in pig butchering scams in 2022. (Source: Wired)

Anna, who exhausted all means of persuasion to deceive me from June 14th to July 6th, 2022, she started sending messages full of complaints on July 6th. I put an end to our conversation with the bad guy smile by informing Anna of the FBI's warning on August 1st, 2022. :)





Haven't you finished your authentication yet?

Jul 5, 2022, 12:41 PM

Not yet.:/

I am on vacation, do it on next week.

Jul 6, 2022, 1:50 AM

awfully sorry

I can't understand.

Jul 6, 2022, 7:33 AM

Why do people always have the habit of procrastinating about such little things? It's justIt's just verification. You can be ready.

I can't understand why things that can be done in a few minutes should be delayed.

Jul 6, 2022, 7:35 AM

What is wrong 1 week?

Jul 6, 202'



MA



It's nothing

Jul 6, 2022, 11:30 AM

I just don't understand why such simple things have to be delayed.

Isn't it best to do such a thing when you have a rest?

Sorry, Maybe it's because I don't like to procrastinate, and I can't understand such things.

People always like to put off the simplest things until the end.

Jul 6, 2022, 11:33 AM

Don't invest in cryptocurrency, I thought you weren't suitable for it. You can't even do such a simple thing well.

Enjoy your vacation, sir,

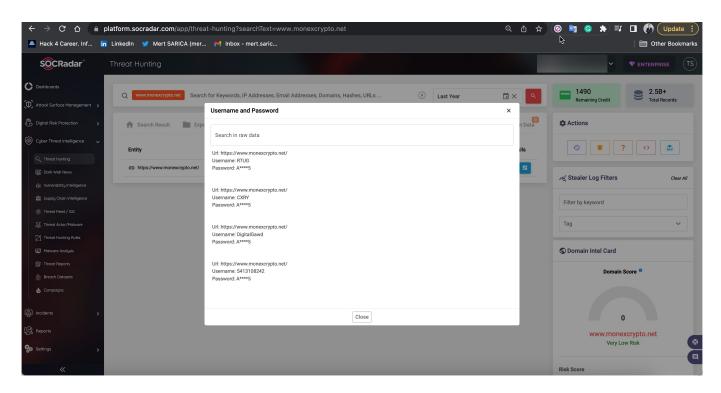
Jul 6, 2022, 11:35 AM

After a period of conversation, I feel that you are not suitable for investing in cryptocurrency. You always procrastinate when you can't even do such a simple thing well. I don't like people who procrastinate. Maybe





It seems that Anna continued to catch new victims in her web without slowing down in the following months and was successful, as some user passwords were also stolen when they entered the monexcrypto.net site on September 5th, 2022, according to information detected as stolen by a malicious software (Stealer) on the SOCRadar Cyber Threat Intelligence platform.



By October, the Monex Group issued a warning that two more websites, starting with the monexcrypto.net website, were using the group logos without permission.



[Notice] Spoofing websites using Monex Group logo and company name

Oct 05, 2022

We are currently receiving several reports of spoof websites using Monex Group logo and company name. The websites using the following domains are detected an not operated by our group. Please be careful not to access any suspicious services/websites or enter any of your personal information.

- Monexcrypto.co
- Monexcrypto.net
- monexcrypto.me

As a result, we have learned in detail how Anna and her scammer friends carried out the Pig Butchering Scam, a well-designed fraudulent scheme, and how they made millions of dollars in loot, from the applications downloaded not only from 3rd party websites but also from the Apple App Store and Google Play Store.

Pig Butchering scam is named after the practice of fattening a pig for slaughter. In this case, scammers build a relationship with a victim online before convincing them to send money or invest in high yield crypto-currency accounts.

I strongly request you to share this article with your friends, loved ones to raise security awareness. Hope to see you in the following articles.