Report on the outcomes of a Short-Term Scientific Mission[1]

Action number: CA22145

Grantee name: Ilaria Truzzi

Details of the STSM

Title: Gaming items from museum collections in Barcelona (Catalunya)

Start and end date: 19/10/2026 – 28/10/2026

Description of the work carried out during the STSM

Description of the activities carried out during the STSM. Any deviations from the initial working plan shall also be described in this section.

(max. 500 words)

Grantee enters max 500 word summary here.

This STSM aimed to collect data from the Archaeological Museum of Catalunya based in Barcelona. The museum collection possessed a wide variety of gaming items, and an ancient gaming board, which had not yet been studied or published. I was able to analyse a series of gaming items—including knucklebones, dice, dice shakers, glass, ceramic bone and stone counters, and gaming sets from many findspots —residential, funerary, military, private and public.

The investigation consisted in the graphic documentation of gaming items from the excavations at cemetery of Puig Des Molins (EIVISSA), an important punic-roman commercial outpost, and other items from excavations sites in Catalunya (e.g. Empuries, Aiugablava, Tossal de la Vila). The research spans diverse centuries, which run from the late Iberian/Punic periods around the 6th century BCE, throughout the first years of the Roman influence at the beginning of the 3rd century BCE, and until the foundation of Roman cities after the conquest of the Peninsula, at the end of the same century. The features of each item that have been recorded are: findspot, dating, material, size and shape, colour, weight, and associated graffiti. All this data has served to build up a database of nearly 150 entries from targeted archaeological sites.

[1] This report is submitted by the grantee to the Action MC for approval and for claiming payment of the awarded grant. The Grant Awarding Coordinator coordinates the evaluation of this report on behalf of the Action MC and instructs the GH for payment of the Grant.

During this trip I also visited other sites in Barcelona, aiming to establish further connections with other museums. I was able to take contact with the Archivists working at the Basilica of Santa Maria del Pi, a once Romanic and later gothic church, which has a very wide and well-known archive. There are two graffiti gaming boards of the nine men's morris type in the Basilica premises, which I was able to see and catalogue. This has also served to have a long interview with the sacristan and the archivist team in the Basilica, which work widely on the artefact collections and the unique book collections kept in their library.

In addition, I found other gaming boards and gaming items evidence at the MUHBA, the history museum of the city of Barcelona, both in their archaeological sites at the Born Barcelona, and the Placa del Rey. I took contact with one of the guides who works there, and shared information about their gaming collections and how to eventually organise a research stay with them in the close future.

Lastly, I looked for evidence of graffiti in the main Cathedral Basilica Metropolitana of Barcelona, and I was able to find a total of three additional graffiti gaming boards of morris type within the cathedral cloister. I could not take contact with the Cathedral museum during my stay, but since they work strictly with the team at Santa Maria del Pi, they will put me in contact with them as well.

Description of the STSM main achievements and planned follow-up activities

Description and assessment of whether the STSM achieved its planned goals and expected outcomes, including specific contribution to Action objective and deliverables, or publications resulting from the STSM. Agreed plans for future follow-up collaborations shall also be described in this section.

(max. 500 words)

Grantee enters max 500 word summary here.

This scientific mission has contributed to the Action objectives by addressing a systematic collection of gaming materials from different pre-roman and roman sites in Catalunya. Important Roman and Iberian/Punic archaeological sites situated in the area have reported evidence of gaming items of different kinds: knucklebones, dice, counters of different material, tesserae, dice shakers. These items have been discovered in diverse spaces and contexts—public, private or funerary. The unique key aspect of this research is the analysis of a significant area in terms of co-habitation of pre-Roman Iberians and Roman people. This will allow to investigate about the similarities and differences of these people that can be identified through the evidence of game-playing. Furthermore, the region lacks a comprehensive study of gaming material, and by undertaking this research I aim to fulfil that gap and to create the first gaming database of key research sites and targeted case studies from the area.

In addition, the collaboration with the Archaeological museum has served to establish a stronger scientific connection with the museum's curators. Many of them are not experts on gaming items, and by undertaking discussions and talks, I was able to give them new tools to recognise gaming items and gaming boards within their collections. We also shared papers and books about the topic of gaming research in the area, and elsewhere, and we will remain in contact. Most of the museum still receive many new archaeological finds from the systematic excavations or urban excavations around the cities and the district, and the curators will mind contacting me if they find new gaming boards data.

The variety of the ancient settlements in the area are good examples of multicultural exchange conditions and co-existence of people in the past, since the time span of occupancy covers both the Pre Roman/Iberian and Roman periods. I was able to look also into items from the Late Republican Roman Period up until the Roman Empire and Byzantine period. By analysing the objects, I aim to investigate further and draw new conclusions about multiculturality and social aspects of the people who inhabited this land from around the 6th century BCE onto the 5th century CE.

The project has also set up the beginning of a much longer collaboration with the MUHBA History museums and the Museum at Basilica of Santa Maria del Pi. We were able to discuss thoroughly about the presence of graffiti gaming boards in church settings.

Finally, these data will also be used in the grantee's PhD thesis on games in ancient Iberia.