

Report on the outcomes of a Short-Term Scientific Mission¹

Action number: CA22145

Grantee name: Julien Hiquet

Details of the STSM

Title: Producing interactive content on Patolli game among the Maya for the Online exhibition of CA22145 Game Table

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)

The stay aimed to develop content for the digital exhibition of Game Table. The Department of New World Archaeology at Jagiellonian University, Krakow, provided a workspace where Julien Hiquet could work daily over the two weeks period of the stay.

A substantial part of the stay was devoted to reviewing the bibliography on patolli and, more broadly, gaming practices among the ancient and modern Maya, in order to identify and synthesize relevant content for the exhibition.

Several discussions were held with Jaroslaw Zralka, Director of the Department of New World Archaeology, who shared his experience in the excavation, conservation and analysis of various Maya archaeological game boards at the site of Nakum (Guatemala). These included both standard and less common examples. It was agreed that the latter could be further discussed and analyzed by Julien Hiquet during future Game Table workshops.

The original large-scale archaeological tracing on tracing paper of three potentially interconnected game boards of Nakum, stored since 2004 and extending over more than three meters in total, was unrolled to allow photogrammetric recording, contributing to its preservation and facilitating the documentation and dissemination of the boards. Unpublished photographs of the Nakum boards were also provided to Julien

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 Grant Holder Manager to verify the grant documents compliance and proceed with the payment.

Hiquet for scientific use in Game Table publications and activities. These materials will enrich the exhibition with previously unpublished, right-cleared images.

Photographs were also taken of a modern commercial version of patolli, produced by the Rietberg Museum in Zurich. Its playing pieces include actual patolli beans, comparable to those used in the ancient Mesoamerican game. These photographs will serve as visual references for the exhibition's illustrations.

Two online meetings were held with the Past and Curious team to discuss the possibilities of production of visual content, including illustrations and animations, in relation to the available budget, and to finalize the texts and illustrations to be included in the exhibition. These discussions were followed by regular exchanges with the artist in charge of the illustrations, to guide the development of the artwork. A Google Drive repository containing iconography materials, drawings and photographs, was created and organized into thematic folders, to support the illustrator's work. It has been constantly fed with new sources. Interestingly, the reference material covered not only gaming practices, but also everyday life and domestic settings, including architecture, clothing, accessories, hairstyles, vegetation... Reconstructing these elements is essential to creating historically informed illustrations, as each component of the ancient environment must be visually reconstructed by the artist, who is not a specialist in Maya civilization.

Finally, on Thursday 17 September, Julien Hiquet delivered a lecture to Master's students at Jagiellonian University on Maya patolli and its archaeological context.

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)

The main achievement of the stay was the development and consolidation of the content and design of the "Maya patolli section" proposed by the GameTable group for the digital exhibition planned for the end of 2026. The stay made it possible to move from the initial proposal of a contribution to a defined set of texts, visual references, and illustrations, based on a combination of bibliographic research, archaeological documentation, and exchanges with specialists of Maya archaeology.

During the stay at Jagiellonian University, the main content of the exhibition contribution had been defined, as well as the selection of photographs and other visual references to illustrate it. A preliminary model of the illustrated digital interface had also been established, providing a concrete framework for the current production of the final illustrations. The documentation gathered during the stay, including previously unpublished photographs of the Nakum game boards, will also contribute to the scientific and visual quality of the exhibition.

The follow-up activities will focus primarily on the completion and implementation of this content. This includes continued collaboration with the illustrator and the Past and Curious team, in order to finalize the illustrations and adapt the content to the technical and visual requirements of the digital exhibition. The thematic image repository prepared during the stay will continue to serve as a reference throughout this process.

A further planned activity is participation in the GameTable online workshop on 20 October 2026, dedicated to the stratigraphic context of several game boards from Naachtun and Nakum, Guatemala. This presentation will provide an opportunity to further develop the archaeological interpretation of

Maya game boards and to test hypothesis for the interpretation of several gameboards in Lowland Maya archaeological contexts with a group of specialists of historic gaming.

Also, the bibliographical research carried out during the stay will also support another major GameTable activity planned for 2026. It enabled the collection and review of relevant material for a forthcoming paper on Mesoamerican gaming devices (game counters). This paper will constitute a contribution to the edited volume *Moving along: Game Pieces in Material Culture* (ed. Walter Christ and Alex de Voogt), to be published by Oxford University Press.

The activities developed during the stay will therefore support both the digital exhibition, one of the main deliverables of the GameTable Group, and the broader research and publication activities of the group.