

Report on the outcomes of a Short-Term Scientific Mission¹

Action number: CA22145

Grantee name: Ilaria Truzzi

Details of the STSM

Title: **Gaming items of the Southern Valencian Community and the Region of Murcia from Museum Collections and Ancient Roman and Iberian people settlements**

Start and end date: 22/03/2025 to 01/04/2025

Description of the work carried out during the STSM

This STSM aimed to collect data from different archaeological sites and museums in the area of the Southern Valencian Community and Region of Murcia- Spain. The visit to diverse collections has successfully served its purposes. 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.

During this trip I visited the:

Museo Arqueológico y Provincial de Alicante,

Museo del Yacimiento Arqueológico de la Alcudia de Elche

Museo Arqueológico y de Historia de Elche

Museo Arqueológico de Murcia

Museo de Arte Ibérico El Cigarralejo

Museo del Teatro y del Foro Romano de Cartagena

Museo Arqueológico Municipal de Cartagena

The investigation consisted in the graphic documentation of gaming items from local Iberian excavations, which are mostly from funerary contexts, and Roman cities. The research spans diverse centuries, which

¹This 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.

run from the late Iberian 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 200 entries from targeted archaeological sites.

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 multiculturalism and social aspects of the people who inhabited this land from around the 6th century BCE onto the 5th century CE.

Lastly, I also visited archaeological ruins, specifically the ancient Roman city of Lucentum-Tossal de Manises, the Illeta dels Banyets and the ruins of the city of Cartagena in the 'Parque arqueológico del Molinete'. I focused on the examination of the ancient streets, thresholds, doorsteps and public spaces to possibly discover and record the presence of graffiti gaming boards. All data – both items and related documentation—are still in the process of being analysed, but this visit has successfully served to set up a first overview of these materials from the Southern Valencian Community and the Region of Murcia.

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

This scientific mission has contributed to the Action objectives by addressing a systematic collection of gaming materials from the Southern Valencian Community and the Region of Murcia. Important Roman and Iberian 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 the host and 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 many museums of the Valencian Community 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 analysis that will be drawn from this research will ultimately help preserving the distinctive cultural heritage of games of the Southern Valencian Community and the Region of Murcia and its varied archaeological evidence.

The project has also set up the beginning of a much longer collaboration with the University of Alicante and the host professor, Raimon Graells I Fabregat. We were able to discuss thoroughly about the presence of gaming items in Iberians tombs, and I was invited to visit the University of Alicante. There, I met Raimon's colleagues and chat about the upcoming archaeological excavations that will take place in the Archaeological Site of the 'Alcudia de Elche', which is partnership with the University of Alicante and its professors of history and archaeology. Raimon and I aim to continue researching the presence of Iberian and Roman gaming items from diverse findspots in the region.

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