

"Words Set in Stone": Exploring the Epigraphic Legacy of Miletos — A Spring School in the Field (15.-22.06.2025)

From inscriptions weathered by millennia to the fresh enthusiasm of young scholars, the epigraphic Spring School *"Words Set in Stone: Exploring the Epigraphic Legacy of Miletos"* offered a unique opportunity to immerse oneself in the material traces of the ancient world. Organized and taught by Prof. Kaja Harter-Uibopuu (Universität Hamburg/CSMC) and Prof. Mustafa Adak (Akdeniz University of Antalya), the program brought together twenty participants from different countries (Turkey, France, Germany) and diverse academic backgrounds – Ancient History, Classics, Manuscript Studies, Archaeology, and Archaeometry – in a truly interdisciplinary setting.



Fig. 1: Teachers and Participants taking a look at inscriptions in Miletus

Funded by the Center for the Study of Manuscript Cultures (CSMC) in Hamburg, the Spring School opened with an introductory lecture on the typology of inscriptions, focusing on both their content and material characteristics. What followed was a week of hands-on engagement with epigraphy in its original context. The group explored the excavation site of ancient Miletos, where students undertook their first attempts at reading inscriptions *in situ*, learning to decipher ancient texts directly from the stones on which they were inscribed.



Fig. 2: Lecture by Kaja Harter-Uibopuu in the garden of the museum of Balat



Fig. 3: Participants while transcribing and documenting inscribed blocks in the museum of Balat

Sessions continued at the museum of Balat and in its garden, where participants transcribed, translated, and contextualized inscriptions, deepening their understanding of layout, physical support, and the interplay between text and material. Practical experience was a core component throughout the week: students prepared documentation, practiced the art of making squeezes, and reflected critically on epigraphic methods.

The program was further enriched by field trips to key sites in the region – Didyma, Priene, Stratonikeia, and Magnesia on the Maeander – which offered comparative perspectives on the epigraphic cultures of western Asia Minor.

Staying at the excavation house in Akköy was a novel and much-appreciated experience for many participants. The serene setting, scenic views, and warm hospitality created a space not only for study, but for conversation, reflection, and the forging of scholarly connections.



Fig. 4: Teachers and participants of the Spring School 2025

In the words of several participants, the week proved to be an "enriching and unforgettable experience." The infectious nature of the field was perhaps best captured in one comment: *"The bacillus epigraphicus is real – and we all caught it."*

Kaja Harter-Uibopuu