The practice of inhumation precedes the origins of agriculture and the foundation of cities. The study of ancient human bones and their archeological context has always stimulated scientific research as well as the popular imagination. Moreover, in the last decade, with the development of new genetic and isotopic techniques of investigation, ancient human bones have become valuable sources for understanding the ways people in the past interacted with both the natural and socially constructed world. However, vivid debates are still going on on how the remains of humans should be treated, handled and preserved. Different countries have different regulations: in many cases ancient human bones are considered and treated as artifacts, in other cases as sacred and reburial after excavation is mandatory in order to preserve the religious integrity of the dead body, even though human bones as a significant source for studying the past are destroyed. Religious and ethnic groups have had their say, too, making the issue even more complex. This presentation will explore different attitudes towards ancient human remains in different areas of the Mediterranean today and will try to interpret them against a historical, cultural, and religious background.

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