

**THE MA'AGAN MICHAEL MERCHANTMAN
IN THE HISTORICAL SETTING OF ITS TIME
(the transition between the 5th & 4th centuries BCE)**

The difficulties in defining the origin and cultural affinity, the ship's route and the identification of its main cargoes, as well as the immediate cause for capsizing—are discussed in another paper presented in this conference by Yac. Kahanov. His analysis and partial conclusions are based on the archaeological evidence of the hull and its contents.

We wish to introduce the historical dimension in a broader sense, with an attempt to outline a scenario which is based on the following inquiries:

- a. Who controlled the regional maritime trade routes in the eastern Mediterranean and who was preoccupied with the long distance trade across the Mediterranean and beyond?
- b. What was the relation between the trading partners among themselves and with the host society along the shores with whom they conducted their commercial enterprises?
- c. How did the political divisions affect the freedom of movement at sea, the degree of safe sailing versus piracy?
- d. Which were the principal commodities in maritime trade which were carried in ships of similar loading capacity as the Ma'agan Michael merchantman?
- e. What role did Cyprus play in the history of our ship, knowing its position as an intermediate trading depot and as a major shipbuilding center.
- f. Which "legal clauses" and treaties were maintained to safeguard the interests of seafaring traders, their ships and goods.

These and other related questions, even if only partially answered, may help solving some of the enigmatic problems concerning the M.M. ship which capsized on what seems to be its "maiden voyage".

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Dr. E. Linder made a verbal communication and the above is the relative abstract.