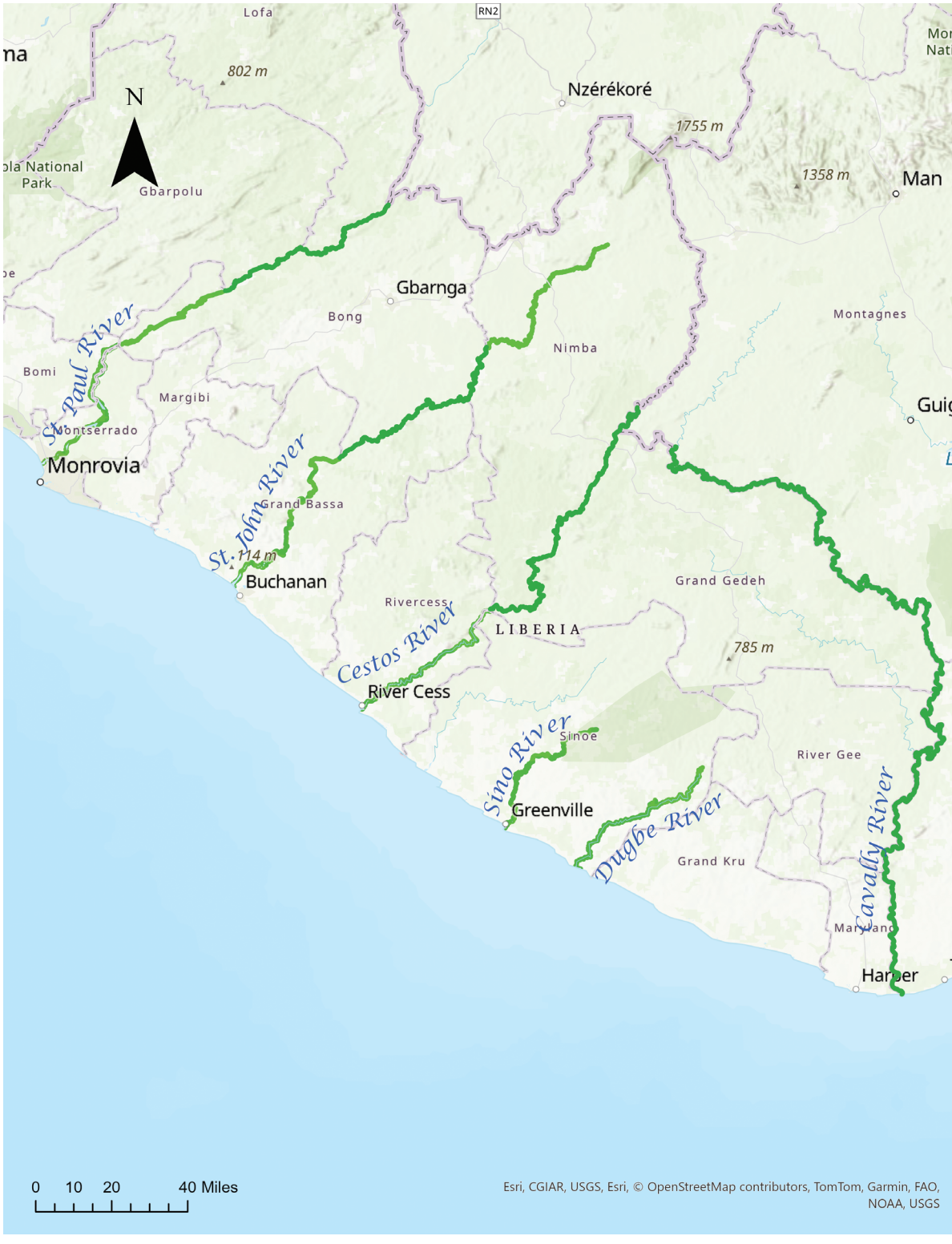


Figure 1. Liberia's major rivers and cities. Image by the authors, ESRI ArcGIS, 2024

Challenging Exoticization: Maritime Archaeology Logistics in West Africa and East Canada

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Abstract

Maritime archaeology often leads researchers to far-flung locations. Africa is often acknowledged in Western academic spheres as a challenging archaeological fieldwork destination due to logistical issues like minimal internet resources, language barriers, and unfamiliar legal and physical landscapes. However, these traits are by no means exclusive to the African continent, and perceived difficulty is not a reason to ignore the vast potential of maritime archaeology in Africa. This article explores archaeological practice in two seemingly different regions: Greenville, Sinoe County, southeastern Liberia, and Gaspé Bay, Québec, eastern Canada. A focused look shows how these two areas are actually not so different. Work in these regions has responded to and worked within environmental and climate constraints, engaged communities of diverse stakeholders, battled internet and data access, adjusted to site destruction and topographical change, and worked within funding constraints to pursue new and exciting avenues of study that otherwise would not happen. Ultimately, the conditions of a maritime city or town in which research is based are far less reflective of a country's wealth and resources than they are of local resources and practice, even in today's globalized world. The comparison of these two projects brings to light the issue that most maritime archaeologists face: logistically, maritime archaeology can be challenging regardless of a country's status on somewhat problematic global development indices. Thus, the long-cited issue of "logistics" for dismissing attempts to study African maritime archaeology is unfounded. By emphasizing the commonalities in the constraints and opportunities of our archaeological efforts, we seek to underline the universality of these challenges and our responses to them.

Keywords

Africa, logistics, Gaspé, Canada, Liberia, Greenville, challenges, maritime archaeology

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Introduction

Modern maritime archaeology is still a young field of study. Though investigations into maritime archaeological resources have occurred for centuries, the first scientific approach to the subject is often credited to George Bass and his team studying the Cape Gelidonya wreck off of Turkey's shores in the 1960s, mere decades ago, as the first scuba diving group of archaeologists who held an underwater archaeological site to the same standards as archaeologists working on land.[1] Not only is the discipline's development less than a century old, maritime archaeological projects take a long time and require extensive resources to complete.[2] Keeping in mind these two traits, it is not totally surprising that maritime archaeological projects in many parts of the globe have yet to be initiated. The Mediterranean and Northern Europe have long been practicing the study of ancient material culture, including that found underwater. As mentioned above, Bass focused his studies on the Mediterranean as early as the 1960s.[3] Submerged and marine archaeological excavations in the Mediterranean since then have been numerous.[4] In addition, Northern Europe now has a long history of maritime archaeology, especially with massive wreck excavation and conservation projects like *Vasa* and *Mary Rose*.[5] Scandinavian archaeology has also dealt with periods ranging from the Neolithic to the present day.[6] On the other side of the Atlantic, North American maritime archaeology has been around for a while, as Bass founded the first field-specific academic program at Texas A&M University in 1976, initiating a widespread national interest in submerged cultural heritage remains. In Mexico and the Caribbean, submerged and maritime archaeology benefits from large-scale heritage initiatives.[7] In South America, programs of maritime archaeology are beginning to develop in consultation with national governments.[8] Australia's Flinders University just celebrated its twentieth anniversary of maritime archaeology.[9] Maritime archaeology in East and Southeast Asia, while in its infancy, is now strongly supported by national governments of these countries.[10]

A growing critique from both within and outside of academia is maritime archaeology's neglect of Africa, especially West Africa.[11] Africa is a large continent that is home to thousands of cultures and histories, many of them maritime. Twenty-two African nations are signatories to the 2001 UNESCO convention on protection of underwater cultural heritage, including: Benin, Cape Verde, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Gabon, Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Ghana, Guinea, Malawi, Madagascar, Mali, Namibia, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, Togo, Algeria, Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco, Mauritania, and Libya.[12] The situation is not dire continent-wide; Egypt, a part of Africa, has one of the world's longest archaeological presences.[13] South Africa and Namibia have received a fair bit of attention from archaeologists, including nautical archaeologists, over the past few decades, while East African excavations have occurred in Tanzania, Mozambique, Zanzibar, Madagascar, and Kenya.[14]

However, while Egypt, South Africa, and even East Africa are at least on the radar in Western scholarly literature about maritime archaeology, a large portion of Africa's coastline, West Africa, has been largely overlooked. Indeed, especially considering the historically and geographically vast and expansive nautical and maritime history of West Africa, the lack of formal archaeological investigations of its waters is astounding.[15] That is not to say that maritime archaeology has not happened in West Africa: projects in Ghana, Sierra Leone, Senegal, and Liberia have investigated the maritime archaeology of the region.[16] However, it is still the case that, as of 2008, 90 percent of African universities did not have an archaeology department.[17] This situation has not changed much in the last fifteen years, but since the 1970s archae-

ologists from Ghana, Nigeria, and Senegal have built robust training programs and support for archaeology in their countries.

Blue and Breen (2019) identify the main problem in "capacity building" for maritime archaeology in the Global South as funding and state apparatus, because "capacity building" is most often derived from Western structures of funding and governance.[18] Additional threats to maritime heritage that they identify include: deficits in governmental support, marginalization of heritage in international development, lack of awareness for maritime archaeology in the Global South, weak legislative protection, colonial-era museums, few professionals trained in the area, limits to environmental protections and maritime plans, political disinterest, and the perception that maritime archaeology is just the study of European shipwrecks and European material culture. In response, they argue that universities should identify what maritime resources exist in their countries and work with states to create collaborative research frameworks to address these problems. These are solutions that have been implemented in places like Ghana and Senegal, countries which have established maritime archaeology programs.

But most of these problems are also found outside of Africa, even in the nations that host some of the most robust sponsored programs for maritime archaeology. For example, many states in the US lack underwater archaeology programs as part of their state historic preservation offices. Across Europe and North America, funding for maritime archaeology is at an all-time low, and the same marginalization of maritime heritage occurs in conversations about environmental policy and economic development.[19] There is a public lack of awareness of maritime archaeology's presence and importance, and most museums from these areas were developed during the colonial era and continue to display objects taken from former colonies. Across the world, including outside Africa, the perception remains that maritime archaeology is "just" the study of shipwrecks conducted by (often) exclusive teams.[20] Just as representation and access are a major problem in the field, logistical concerns for survey, diving, and funding maritime archaeology projects remain a challenge.

In light of this, it cannot truly be said that working in Africa presents a unique set of problems for maritime archaeologists, thus limiting the practice of maritime archaeology on the continent. This is a belief rooted in ignorance of the current "capacity" and possibility in Africa, especially West Africa. In other words, the perception of difficulty thwarts the imagination of possibilities for maritime archaeology in Africa. What this paper argues and seeks to prove through our comparative case studies is that the perceived challenges for maritime archaeology in Africa are challenges common to the practice of maritime archaeology across the world. The difficulties are not continental, national, or even financial. While this piece does not center the discussion of maritime archaeology's epistemologies, it does present two very practical cases of maritime archaeological problems.[21] Comparing the on-the-ground realities of these two case studies allows us to identify the struggles and challenges of maritime archaeology practice in remote areas around the world. In doing so, we contribute to a larger corpus of work focused on decolonizing maritime archaeology and presenting new viewpoints on its practice.

Maritime Heritage and Archaeology in Liberia

Liberia is a small country in West Africa bordering Guinea, Côte d'Ivoire, and Sierra Leone. It is home to sixteen recognized Indigenous groups and a small population descended from African American and Afro-Caribbean settlers who moved to Liberia during the nineteenth-century Back-to-Africa movement. Liberia is also a nation which has hosted little academic or compliance archaeological research in the last forty years, with the

Back-to-Africa Heritage and Archaeology Project being the first project established in the country after the civil wars.[22] Recovering from a brutal civil war (1989–2003) that killed more than 250,000 people, the nation is still rebuilding vital infrastructure like roads, electricity, and running water. Most households across Liberia still do not have running water or electricity. However, Liberia has a vibrant maritime history and heritage that spans prehistory to the present. The coastal area of Liberia was settled as early as the Neolithic period.[23] By the fifteenth century, Indigenous Liberians were trading with arriving Portuguese ships. Some of the earliest Portuguese travel accounts reference the area of pre-Liberia between the modern-day St. John's and Cavalla rivers. In fact, the Cestos River in Liberia, in modern-day River Cess county, was named after the Portuguese term for a flat basket in which Indigenous Liberians transported *malagueta* pepper.[24] By the eighteenth century, Indigenous Liberians like the Kru had formed strategic trade and wage labor relationships with Europeans, especially the British and Germans, that put them into regular contact with these groups and regular circulation across the Atlantic and Indian oceans.[25] At the time of the Liberian settlers' arrival in 1822, Liberians living by the Atlantic had seen centuries of contact, trade, and connection with outsiders.

Liberia was colonized by free African American and Afro-Caribbean people starting in 1822. Under the auspices of the American Colonization Society, a group led mostly by elite white southerners, plantation owners, and abolitionist Quakers, the settlers began to eke out an existence in the area of Liberia, using similar methods of land acquisition and labor exploitation as Europeans had used to colonize America from Native Americans.[26] Maritime trade remained a vital part of their subsistence and economy, as agriculture in Liberia proved to be different from their experiences in the US, and luxury goods were traded via maritime networks.[27] Historical records also indicate quite a few shipwrecks present on the Liberian coast, ranging from a 1473 Flemish shipwreck noted by Portuguese authors to modern metal hull wrecks from the world wars.[28] Liberia's maritime heritage is, therefore, of global importance.

Despite this importance, maritime archaeology has not been conducted in Liberia. Terrestrial projects aimed at understanding the colonization and settler experience, as well as Indigenous Liberian interaction with maritime trade and settlement, have advanced archaeological research in the country; however, there are some major logistical challenges that must be overcome even for terrestrial projects. Recent work in southeastern Liberia, especially around the small city of Greenville, has illustrated some of the challenges of working in remote areas.

Greenville is the capital of Sinoe County, Liberia, which is Liberia's largest county by landmass but second-to-last in terms of population density. The population of Sinoe County is growing; during the 2008 Liberian census, it was below 105,000.[29] In the recently published 2022 census, Sinoe County was reported as having a population of over 150,000, 29 percent of whom are engaged primarily in agricultural employment.[30] More people are engaged in subsistence farming. Greenville had a population of around 29,000 at the time of the 2022 census.[31] Most people living in Sinoe County have an average of 4.5 years of schooling, and the life expectancy in Sinoe County is around 56 years on average, making it the second lowest in the country.[32] The literacy rate in Sinoe County is just over 50 percent, an improvement from previous years.[33] Only 32.7 percent of Liberians have household access to electricity, and this figure was much lower in Sinoe; similarly, 40.2 percent of households have indoor or flushing toilets.[34] Southeastern Liberia, including Sinoe, Grand Kru, River Cess, River Gee, and Maryland counties, is more isolated from the northern side of the country, where the capital of Monrovia is, because of



Figure 2. A main street in downtown Greenville, Sinoe County. Image by the authors, 2024

the road system. This is especially true in the rainy season, when dirt roads become nearly impassable. There are two main ways to get to Greenville: either via road, passing through Buchanan on a paved road and then by dirt roads along the coast through I.T.I. town and Butaw, or via Missionary Aviation Flight's (MAF) small bush planes. Greenville also has a working airstrip and a port, but the port is mostly defunct. There is very little accurate information about the area on the internet as a result of the aforementioned factors, like lack of electricity.

In this context, archaeological practice is challenged by environment, infrastructure, and resources. The first challenge is Liberia's environment, some aspects of which are common across West Africa's Atlantic ecological zone. Liberia has two seasons: a dry season where temperatures soar above 95 Fahrenheit and dirt roads turn to clouds of dust, and a rainy season, where weeks of constant rain wash out entire roads, destroy bridges, and flood communities. Liberia's coastal topography is also common to West Africa, where low-elevation lagoons on the coast variably flood and drain into the ocean. Coastal rivers often have large-scale topographical changes due to sedimentation even in the course of one day or one week, and areas farther upriver are home to protected mangrove forests. The Atlantic coast of Liberia is sandy and rocky, with extreme swells and currents (though not as dramatic as those documented by nautical archaeologists working off of Ghana).[35] The waves in Liberia have been so dramatic throughout history that some European authors referred to their boiling, roiling waters as "the burnings."[36] Archaeological excavation is also normally conducted outdoors and tends to be physical work, so extreme weather and uncomfortable temperatures and humidity can be obstacles to practice.

In addition, there are technological and equipment concerns. Many archaeological excavations, especially those reaching lower geological levels, begin with heavy machinery. In many regions of Liberia, heavy machinery (locally termed "yellow machines") is difficult if not impossible to procure, transport, and bring to these areas. For example, in rural areas outside of Greenville, there are often few roads bigger than a motorbike trail. Heavy vegetation around these trails restricts access of any type of vehicle, let alone the machinery used for large-scale archaeological excavation. There is also a widespread (and true) perception that ingress to these areas with heavy machinery will bring about ecological devastation, as has been the case with illicit Chinese-run mining operations in Liberia.[37]

Other technological considerations have to be made based on Liberia's climate. Sensitive equipment that is not suited for hot, humid climates or dust and dirt cannot be used in this area of Liberia. There is not climate control in many areas of the southeast (because there is no central electrical current). Field equipment that relies on short-term use in these climates, but long-term storage in climate-controlled spaces, will not be able to be used in Liberia. Even laptops and cell phones suffer from the heat and humidity; batteries swell, charging ports get clogged with dust, and cables sometimes blow from the irregular electrical current pumped through them. While the capital city of Monrovia has every resource an archaeologist could need, the more rural city of Greenville has very few stores that sell the needed components to repair or adjust specialized equipment of any kind. There is also variable internet access; in 2024, teams in Liberia reported complete lack of cellular connectivity for over four days due to a cable outage from the cellular provider Orange. In many remote areas, there are no cell towers, and thus no data is available. This limits access to academic resources and to the internet in ways that researchers often take for granted.

Many of these obstacles in technology and climate are exacerbated by infrastructural concerns. Liberia's (mostly dirt) road system, which the cur-



Figure 3. Images of the road conditions in Liberia during the rainy season show the difficulty of accessing regions outside the capital of Monrovia. Image by Megan Crutcher, 2024

rent president promised to grade, still remains almost impassable except by motorbike at many times of the year. The limited transportation that does pass includes heavy trucks laden with vital goods for people living in rural areas, as well as some old passenger cars that are notoriously unreliable. The Toyota Land Cruiser is the NGO car of choice for passing through these roads, but even the Land Cruiser is no match for a muddy Liberian road in the middle of the rainy season.

To address these obstacles, the primary objective is careful planning. With local modes of transportation like motorbikes and walking available, fieldwork in Liberia often resembles that carried out in more remote regions of the US and Canada, where archaeologists backpack in materials and equipment. Unlike these regions, however, Liberia's remote areas do not lack food and water infrastructure, so backcountry meals are not needed as Liberian food can be acquired. Equipment can be commissioned to be made locally, and there is wide availability of archaeological equipment online that is intended for this type of travel. Other considerations include the lack of access to electricity. All archaeological work is conducted primarily analog, on paper, with pencil—just like at other maritime sites, where water threatens more sophisticated recording methods. Artifacts are photographed using phone cameras. Solar charging power banks are transported to every site, but computers and tablets are not.



Figure 4. Canoe transport of gasoline and passengers to small towns outside Greenville. Image by Megan Crutcher, 2024

Much of maritime archaeology's challenge, outside of resource acquisition, still lies in public perception. As one Liberian researcher stated, "One of the reasons why they say that some of those archaeological histories were not really preserved is that people were not having time for them. It's that someone wasn't even thinking about it."[38] Like in the US, archaeology is only briefly covered in Liberian schools and some people do not see the value in it.[39] As Crutcher's project team conducted surveys during long-term fieldwork there, however, we began to see community stakeholders take interest in archaeology and start to look for artifacts on the beach or in the forest. Every day, people would bring us small pieces of ceramic, bead, pipes, or even metal that they had found. When empowered to conduct archaeology of their own maritime heritage, people did what they could to contribute and learn more about their own origins and identities. People began to tell project researchers about local shipwrecks (most of them modern, metal hulls) and question why underwater materials remained "out of sight, out of mind."[40] Fishers also encouraged researchers to document their boatbuilding processes and repairs, while local elders urged the team to preserve their memories of working aboard ships during the early twentieth century. This illustrates two things: first, people are often uninformed about maritime archaeology and the importance of coastal and underwater cultural heritage, and this is probably one reason why they *seem* uninterested (but are not

actually); second, the practice of archaeology and the process of seeking information about the past is almost always already ongoing in communities, even if informal. It remains for maritime archaeologists to tap into these structures and learn from them, rather than reshape them to fit our own ideas of what communities need.

While certain aspects of infrastructure are obstacles, in terms of maritime infrastructure and governance, Liberia is well equipped for maritime archaeological work. Comanaged fisheries and canoe organizations often collaborate with researchers, especially on environmental justice and climate-focused improvements.[41] Liberian artisanal fishers, who are the closest stakeholders to maritime archaeological efforts, are politically active and fight for protections for underwater resources, such as implementing a ban on trawling.[42] There are still challenges to maritime livelihoods (to which maritime archaeology is integrally connected); in some areas of Liberia, maritime accidents are extremely common because many artisanal fishers do not have life jackets, motors are old and finicky, and there is not a significant coast guard or rescue presence. Instead, maritime search and rescue is conducted by collectives of artisanal fishers.[43] Since 2019, 606 maritime incidents involving artisanal fishers have been recorded; many more have likely gone unreported.[44] The Liberian Maritime Authority is an established, well-funded, and effective government agency that oversees imports and exports as well as maritime registration. In fact, Liberia's maritime registry of cargo ships is the largest in the world.[45] Commercial maritime work in Liberian ports and fishing in Liberia's six-mile exclusion zone employs many Liberians.[46] Artisanal fishing is a central fixture of Liberia's economy; over 3,000 canoes and 33,000 fishers rely on artisanal fishing for their livelihoods.[47] Knowing this, maritime archaeology that focuses solely on Liberia's colonial history is not sufficient; Indigenous traditions have long shaped the maritime history of the region and are important areas of study. Small watercraft, local navigation techniques, and traditional navigational knowledge will be vital parts of the implementation of future maritime archaeological research in the country.

Maritime Archaeology in Gaspé, Canada

While these issues may be at least subconsciously expected of fieldwork in Liberia, few field outsiders would expect similar obstacles in a relatively wealthy, resource-rich country. That said, maritime archaeology as a field tends to focus on areas of the world that are innately difficult to access, regardless of national borders and GDP. We often fail to consider how maritime archaeologists working in, say, Canada, might encounter many of the same kinds of challenges as seen in Liberia. The Gaspé Maritime Archaeology Project of 2019 and 2022 demonstrates just how similar maritime archaeology logistics can be wherever a project takes place.

Economically and technologically, Canada has developed in parallel with the US. Though leaning slightly more socialist than its southern neighbor, Canada is similarly recognized as a wealthy country. Part of its wealth derives from its rich natural resources, which is exactly what drove Europeans to begin exploring the land now known as Canada in the early sixteenth century. In the historic period, it was the abundance of cod on Canada's eastern shores that attracted several Western European nations to the Gulf of St. Lawrence, bordering on the shores of Newfoundland and the isolated region of eastern Québec known as Gaspé.[48]

The Gaspé region's historical period began with Jacques Cartier's arrival in 1534, though other European fishermen had likely been in the area earlier.[49] By the late 1500s, the French dominated the fisheries, developing unique curing methods suited to Gaspé's geography. During this period, the French began building and modifying larger ships for seasonal transatlantic journeys. These ships were born of the Iberian galleon and *nau* ship-

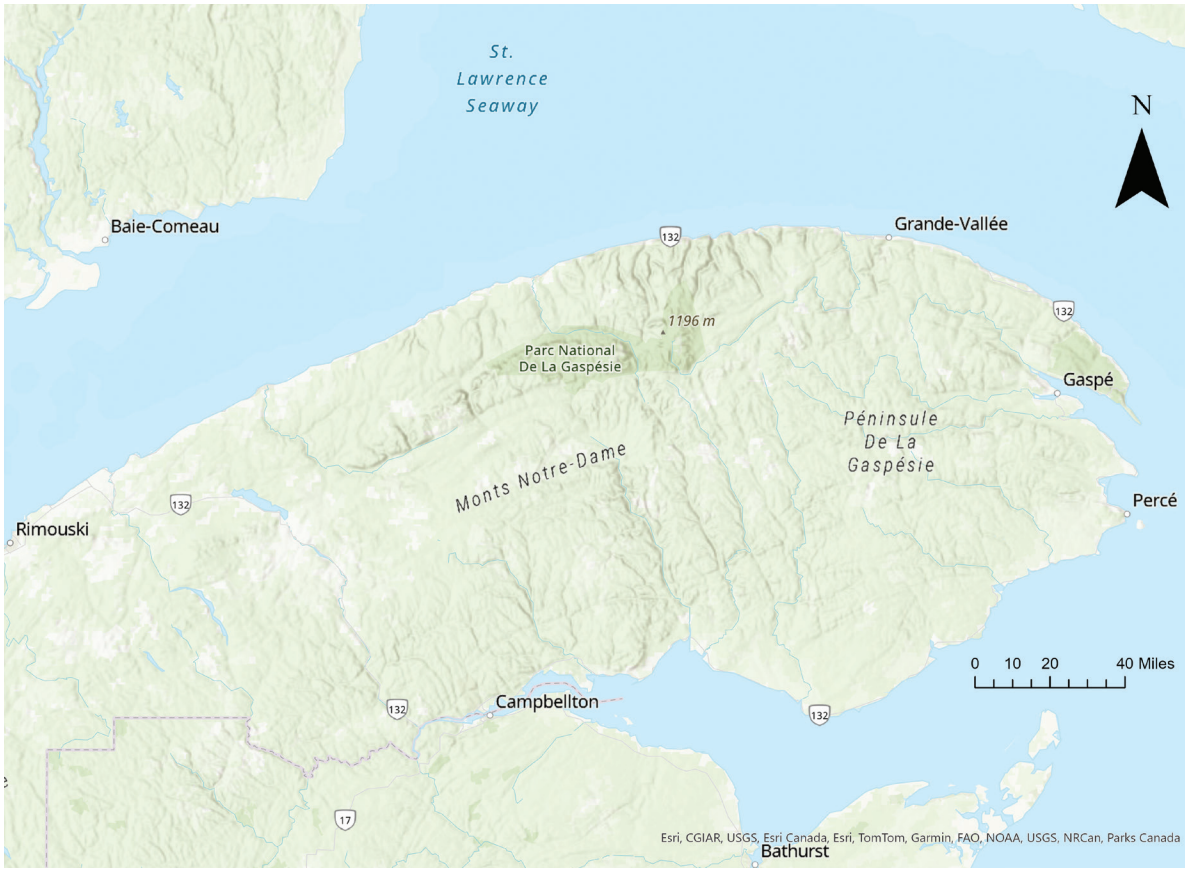


Figure 5. The Gaspé Peninsula, which spans from Rimouski (west) to the Percé (east), bordered by the St. Lawrence Seaway (north) and Chaleur Bay followed by the New Brunswick border (south). Image by the authors, ESRI ArcGIS, 2024

building traditions but were adapted to maximize transatlantic fishing hauls. It is remnants of these ships that recently brought maritime archaeologists to Gaspé, where they were confronted with a surprisingly similar planning and logistical experience to that found in Greenville.[50]

Deriving its name from the Mi'kmaq word for "Land's End," Gaspé is a sparsely populated region on the eastern shore of mainland Québec. In 2016, the economic region of Gaspé had a population of 90,311, a 4 percent decline from 2011. The average age of this population was 47.6, with a median age of 52.2, five and nine years higher respectively than the provincial average and median. In 2015, Gaspesian households averaged a total income of 63,743 (CAD), only 82 percent of the average total income of households for the entire province. Out of 88,130, only 950 individuals were immigrants (1 percent), compared with the province of Québec reporting nearly 14 percent of its population as immigrants.[51] These statistics illustrate an aging, less affluent population, with an unusually large percentage boasting ancestral ties to the region. Although Gaspé differs statistically from Sinoe County, it experiences similar economic concerns and population attrition to major cities as Greenville does.

This data corroborates with firsthand accounts from Gaspesians. Many indicated they moved back to the area after retirement, and that many young people move to the big cities for education and work opportunities. Locals purport that

the suspension of rail service in 2013 adversely affected tourism to the region, and may also have affected the population decline seen from 2011 to 2016.[52] The lack of rail access has almost certainly contributed to Gaspé's classification as a "remote area" or "very remote area," according to Statistics Canada.[53]

While Gaspé was the mainland's historical hub for French transatlantic fishing, it was then and remains today isolated from most of the rest of the province of Québec.[54] As such, while its archaeological potential is vast, logistically the location is challenging for planning purposes. While the infrastructure is more advanced than Greenville—for example, the roads are paved and there is internet access in most towns—with the absence of rail service now there is only one small, regional airport with flights solely through Québec City, costing upward of $1,000. This puts the onus on the visitor to drive, at a minimum, the seven-hour drive from Québec City or the eleven-hour drive from Montreal.

While there is one scuba diving shop, it is located in Percé, the tourist capital of the peninsula, which is an hour away from the town of Gaspé and an hour and a half from Parc Forillon (located on the north side of Gaspé Bay, the eastern tip of the northern corner of the peninsula—see map). Fully stocked grocery stores may be up to an hour drive from a given location. The resources of the region are geographically spread out, costing valuable project time to travel from site to store or vice versa. This is actually a more difficult scenario in which to accommodate teams of archaeologists than in southern Liberia; even the smallest local towns in Liberia have general stores and markets where ingredients can be purchased.

Though it is well known that Gaspé's shores are littered with shipwrecks, very few maritime archaeologists have worked in the area.[55] Parks Canada's Underwater Archaeology Team has responded to local reports of shipwrecks and nautical finds, and on one occasion a nautically trained CRM archaeologist examined a shipwreck discovered on a local beach; however, the area has received only minimal attention from maritime archaeologists considering its role in the Age of Discovery and the European colonization of North America.[56] This is likely due to its remoteness and the lack of information available online about the resources of the area.

Similarly to Liberia, the best way to learn about Gaspé's history is through oral histories and conversations with the population. Whether because of the minimal written sources, the ancestral ties most residents hold to the region, a specific pride in their history, or the information lacking from accessible sources like published scholarship and public postings on the web, the most historical information about the region can be found in any conversation with Gaspesians. It was through word of mouth with residents in 2019 that GMAP researchers learned the locations of valuable cultural resources. It is worth noting that one of the most modern, well-executed maritime museums can be found in the town of Gaspé. There, non-digitized archival sources show that there is, in fact, quite a lot of information written down; however, it is only currently accessible in person. The lack of online access to these documents does contrast with the relevant documents that researchers used from the Liberian national archives, many of which have been digitized or were transferred to Indiana University during the civil wars.

In addition to its remote location and limited access, Gaspé is infamous for its cold winters and unpredictable weather events.[57] Climate change has made this infinitely worse over the past two decades, and Gaspé's shorelines have experienced dramatic changes due to erosion.[58] This creates additional challenges for maritime archaeologists as cultural resources buried on or near shorelines, or even those underwater, may be visible at some times but not others. In fact, this was one of the



Figure 6. The Cap-des-Rosiers wreck is visible, having been washed out by spring 2023 drainage swells. Image courtesy Cleo Buttineau, 2023



Figure 7. The wreck site in the final week of the 2022 field project; the overnight tide had deposited rocks and sand directly over the wreck itself with the river drainage flow shifted to the irregular circular shape seen here. Image by the authors, 2022

great challenges of the GMAP 2022 season; a shipwreck located by residents of Cap-des-Rosiers on a small beach was revealed in the spring of 2020 and again in 2022 when heavy rains rerouted a small river drainage to flow directly over the top of the buried wreck, with the spring swells washing the heavy rocks and sand covering out to sea.[59] When the archaeological crew arrived in midsummer, the wreck was once again covered by rocks and sand, unbeknownst to the crew, approximately four feet deep. The makeup of large stones and coarse sand was not conducive to probing, so relocation of the wreck was quite challenging. Once the wreck was relocated, there was a constant tug-of-war between the river drainage washing the overlay out to sea and the tide dumping it back on top of the wreck. Any given day of the project, the archaeologists would arrive on-site to a new scene: either the wreck fully re-covered by the tide, or an entirely new portion of the wreck uncovered by the shifting drainage stream.

Based on local accounts, this is entirely typical of all of Gaspé's shorelines. A wreck discovered by locals was recorded by Québecois maritime archaeologist Érik Phaneuf (with AECOM) in 2011.[60] That same wreck that had been near fully exposed was almost completely buried again in 2019 when GMAP researchers attempted to relocate the wreck. Additionally, though unconfirmed, it is suspected (based on locals' accounts and some minimal observations) that completely submerged resources may suffer from similar covering and uncovering, leading to adverse effects of erosion and also making them much more difficult to locate and subsequently study.

Finally, the last challenge of the region is political. While it is laudable that Québec wishes to maintain its francophone culture and language, the requirement that all government paperwork—for example, archaeological permitting—be done in French certainly restricts other language groups' access to study of Quebéc's rich cultural heritage.[61] In some ways, this is admirable; as archaeologists, we are beginning to move toward a decolonized study in which cultural stakeholders have first claim to their ancestral pasts; however, the lack of accessibility to English regulations and publications has made Québec's archaeology less accessible to wider audiences and possible researchers. The journal *Archéologiques*, Québec's primary peer-reviewed source of archaeological studies, recognizes this issue and allows English-language articles and research notes. This is beneficial especially for underwater studies as only a handful of maritime archaeologists globally are native Québecois. It is true that many more maritime archaeologists speak French; for example, France has a robust maritime archaeology scene. However, the stakeholder maritime archaeologists most invested in Québec's heritage, especially as the gateway to colonization of Canada and North America, are generally located in North America, the majority of whom speak and publish in English.

This political boundary is not aided by the province's complex network of permitting, particularly for maritime archaeological excavation. While Québec's archaeological permitting is run through the Ministry of Culture, all submerged resources and maritime (submerged or adjacent) land is under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of the Environment. This means that no maritime archaeological permit may be granted without a minimum of two permits, as one permit from the Ministry of the Environment must be sought and received first before the Ministry of Culture can approve the archaeological project. Until recently, the proposition of archaeological excavation underwater was also almost entirely unattainable due to Ministry of Environment permit *prices*, which lumped archaeological work in with infrastructure development projects, an entirely different pay grade. Only after substantial lobbying efforts of Québecois maritime archaeologists was this fee recently waived.[62] While maritime archaeological

excavation is no longer cost-prohibitive, extensive permitting does add to the already-great burden of planning and carrying out projects in a remote location like Gaspé.

Common Challenges, Common Solutions

We have identified several common challenges between Liberia and Canada. These include temperamental environments, remote locations with variable access, population densities and local memory, and documentation challenges. One common challenge remains the distance from the metropole; Gaspé is far from Montreal, while Greenville is far from Monrovia. This is geographically insurmountable, but can be dealt with through careful planning and implementation. Until Liberia's road conditions improve, the situation on the ground will likely continue to be difficult in terms of transportation and machinery. Similarly, the distance between Gaspé and nearby towns presents an obstacle to transportation, even in terms of access to gasoline and food sources. Finally, while political obstacles may often be envisioned by Western researchers when mentally planning fieldwork in Liberia, between these two case studies it is in fact Canada that often presents the greater challenge in this category.

Though both regions share challenges, and each present their own unique ones, we also described the common solutions we have found to these challenges. The first common solution identified was to work with local communities. In Canada and Liberia, this has proved to be the most important aspect of projects aimed at documentation and recovery of maritime heritage. It is important to build long-term partnerships with local stakeholders who govern site access and identification, as well as contribute to the stewardship of archaeological sites. It is also important to work alongside stakeholders to build local expertise in maritime archaeology, especially the identification and recording of sites. The second common solution involves adaptation to these environmental and technological challenges. Practical steps like transporting extra chargers, batteries, and solar-powered devices helps confront certain infrastructural issues in Liberia, as well as in remote Canada. Deep knowledge of the region and its amenities also helps archaeologists adjust their expectations and create better plans for accessing necessary resources like gasoline and water.

These two case studies illustrate the potential for collaborative global solutions in maritime archaeology. The problems that we face as a discipline occur across the field, without regard for time or place. Maritime archaeology is naturally inclined to take place in challenging conditions as it is often those same conditions that resulted in there being archaeological resources there in the first place. Catastrophic shipwreck events were in many cases direct results of unpredictable seas; these places remain challenging or impossible places to conduct archaeological research. Sunken settlements are now submerged maritime landscapes because of climate change and coastal erosion. Ships were used throughout history to bypass borders, ignoring (or flying in the face of) political constraints, and to specifically access remote areas otherwise inaccessible. These remote regions often contain some of the best-preserved archaeological resources *because* they are remote and have therefore rarely been disturbed by human activity. These challenges are intrinsic to the study of maritime archaeology and may be encountered anywhere in the world.

Lack of capacity (ranging in definition from legal capacity to preserve shipwrecks, to educational capacity for in-country archaeological training) has been identified by some as an obstacle to maritime archaeology in Africa.[63] However, this lack of capacity is no more glaring in rural Liberia than in rural Canada, where archaeologists face challenges with remoteness, transportation, or other practical logistics. Faced with this reality, we must grapple with the idea that the absence of significant maritime archaeology efforts in Africa

is often rooted in a disciplinary Eurocentric focus and neglect of Indigenous traditions around the world. Continuing to discuss the African continent in isolation from other global developments of the field is no longer serving the discipline and will not carry our practice into the anti-racist, decolonial future imagined by archaeologists around the world.[64] One area in which maritime archaeology stands to grow as a discipline is in diverse representation and community participation.[65] As the examples of Gaspé and Greenville show, a reflective and reflexive maritime archaeology practice in areas deemed remote or challenging involves close collaboration with local communities. By increasing discussions of our common concerns, training, "capacity-building," infrastructure, outreach, and logistics, we can start to move the discipline toward this aim.

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