

***Contrasts at the crossroads: African-American archaeology in Louisiana***

Shannon Lee Dawdy

Geographically, Louisiana sits at the crossroads of North America and the Caribbean, and of the American Deep South and the western frontier. Historically, Louisiana forms the crossroads of the French, Spanish, and British colonies. Because of its complex history, Louisiana highlights the variety of the diaspora experience in the Americas. A review of Louisiana archaeology will be provided, focusing on plantation sites and urban sites related to the unique Afro-Creole culture of Louisiana. African cultural contributions in landscape, architecture, and belief are exceptionally well illustrated in Louisiana. Thus "crossroads" also refers to the African-derived belief in the power of the geographical nexus. The strength of African culture in Louisiana is due in part to the relationship established early on between French colonists and enslaved Africans who originated mostly from Senegambia. Slavery under the French, and later the Spanish, was operated with a set of rules and understandings in some ways quite different from that of the Anglo-American system. This, combined with the different African roots of the slave populations, resulted in the formation of two distinct "African-American" communities in Louisiana whose differences are expressed in the material record.