

BOLD Ideas, ESSENTIAL Reading

Race and Nation in Puerto Rican Folklore

Franz Boas and John Alden Mason in Porto Rico

RAFAEL OCASIO

"*Rafael Ocasio's Race and Nation in Puerto Rican Folklore* will be of significant interest to students of Puerto Rican culture and history as it skillfully revives important events involving the U.S. and Puerto Rico that have lost definition with the passing of time, even if they have not lost relevance. The author brings to bear on an anthropological topic his unique talent for literary and cultural criticism."

—Rudyard Alcocer, author of *Time Travel in the Latin American & Caribbean Imagination: Re-reading History*

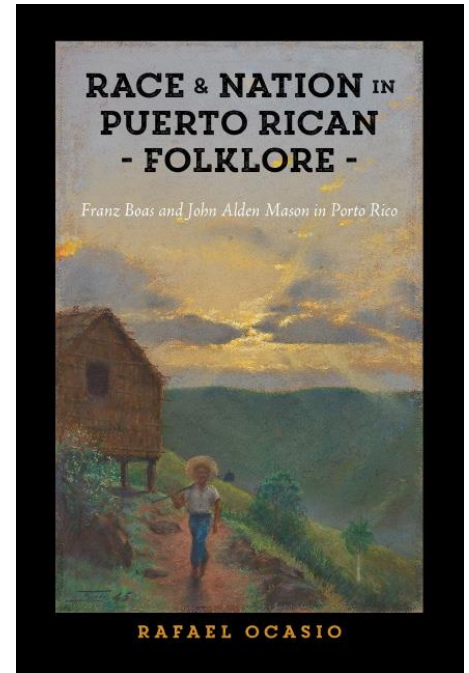
"*Race and Nation in Puerto Rican Folklore* is a must-read for those interested in the cultural layout of early twentieth-century Puerto Rico and its burgeoning, socio-political consciousness. Ocasio expertly traces the multicultural artifacts of oral transmission collected by 'the Father of American Anthropology,' Franz Boas and his mentee, John Alden Mason on the Island at the turn of the century, revealing the relationship between those texts and Boricua identity."

—Angie Willis, co-author of forthcoming *Reinaldo Arenas, Pedagogue: Readings for a Post-Fidel Castro Era*

Race and Nation in Puerto Rican Folklore: Franz Boas and John Alden Mason in Porto Rico explores the founding father of American anthropology's historic trip to Puerto Rico in 1915. As a component of the Scientific Survey of Porto Rico and the Virgin Islands, Boas intended to perform field research in the areas of anthropology and ethnography there while other scientists explored the island's natural resources. Native Puerto Rican cultural practices were also heavily explored through documentation of the island's oral folklore. A young anthropologist working under Boas, John Alden Mason, rescued hundreds of oral folklore samples, ranging from popular songs, poetry, conundrums, sayings, and, most particularly, folktales. Through extensive excursions, Mason came in touch with the rural practices of Puerto Rican peasants, the *Jíbaros*, who served as both his cultural informants and writers of the folklore samples. These stories, many of which are still part of the island's literary traditions, reflect a strong Puerto Rican identity coalescing in the face of the U.S. political intervention on the island. A fascinating slice of Puerto Rican history and culture sure to delight any reader!

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