



LEGENDS OF MICRONESIA

Book Two

MICRONESIAN READER SERIES

Legends of Micronesia

BOOK TWO

Text by EVE GREY

Illustrations by TAMBI LARSEN

Maps by Charles A. Williams, *Journalist Third Class, USN*

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Etao And The Koñe-Wood Canoe

Etao played another trick before he left Mejuro Island. He needed a boat. In those days, every man made his own. The best boatmaker in Mejuro Island was a man named Koko. He had a wonderful new sailing canoe. It was beautifully shaped and very fast.

It had a strong woven sail. The mast and rigging were decorated with colored feathers and coconut ribbons. They were tied to the rigging in special ways, for good luck. Best of all, the canoe could carry a heavy load.

Etao wanted Koko's canoe for himself, but the question was, how to get it. "I'll make a boat, trade with him, and then go away," he said to himself.

He didn't look for an old breadfruit tree. He took a log of the *koñe* tree and carved out a canoe. *Koñe* wood is too heavy to float, which Etao knew very well. The wood can be polished, and Etao polished his canoe until it shone like the sun. He took it to the lagoon at night. He set it in such a way that it rested upon some flat rocks under the water, but it looked as though it floated. He loaded the canoe with heavy stones, to show how strong it was. The next day many men came to see it, and Koko sailed over in his canoe to look at it.

"It can carry a heavier load than mine," he said, "and what a wonderful shine it has."

"As a special favor, I'll trade boats with you," said Etao.

So they traded boats. Etao had all his things ready. He piled them quickly into Koko's boat, said goodbye to everyone, and paddled off in a great hurry.

Koko pushed the stones out of Etao's boat and got in. Then he found out that the canoe sat upon flat rocks. He pushed it off. It sank at once in the deep water. Koko had to wade to shore, angry and ashamed.

"Catch Etao! Don't let him go away with my canoe!" he cried.

A great race took place. Many men paddled after Etao. More and more canoes sailed out into the lagoon. The great reef of



Mejuro lagoon had only one passage where boats could go through to the sea. The plan was to cross Etau's path before he could go through the passage. He would have to give up or turn back to shore.

Etau saw them coming, some behind him, some sailing fast to cut him off. He couldn't get away from all the canoes, even though he had the fastest one of all, because many of the canoes were near the passage when they started. So Etau kicked up, from the bottom of the lagoon, great piles of rocks and sand. They made a long point of land that cut off the first canoes. The men had to go around it. That took a great deal of time.

Whenever canoes came in front of him, he kicked up another point of land. Today, those long arms of land are still there, on the eastern side of Mejuro Island, in the lagoon. They can be seen plainly, especially at low tide.

It took a long time for the boats to go around those long points of land. By that time, Etao had gone through the reef passage and had disappeared in the blue horizon. He had a fine time sailing Koko's wonderful canoe. A pleasant breeze carried him fast over the water. As he sailed along, he sang loudly.

Etao's songs are still known to the people, and the rocks upon which he set his *koñe* boat are still in the lagoon at Mejuro.

