



LEGENDS OF MICRONESIA

Book Two

MICRONESIAN READER SERIES

Legends of Micronesia

BOOK TWO

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The one that she gave Etao was made of fine shell from around her shoulders. The one that she gave Jemeliwut was made of the poorer shell that grew near her tail. She gave Etao wonderful powers, even the power of life and death.

Etao was happy. He could change himself to a leaf, a tree, a child, a fruit, a fish, a monster, a pretty girl, or anything else. But when Lijōbake, the Great Mother Tortoise, gave her son, Etao, magical powers, she forgot to make him wise and kind. He often used the power of life and death for sport or cruelty.

Etao Gave Fire To The People

Etao and his brother Jemeliwut sailed and sailed, visiting the atolls of the Marshall Islands. They came one day to Likiep Island. They were hungry, but they had no fishing gear. They were glad when they saw men out fishing.

Etao asked a man if he might use his fishing pole. "Use your own pole and get your own fish!" said the man. All the others said the same. Not one would lend the two strangers a pole.

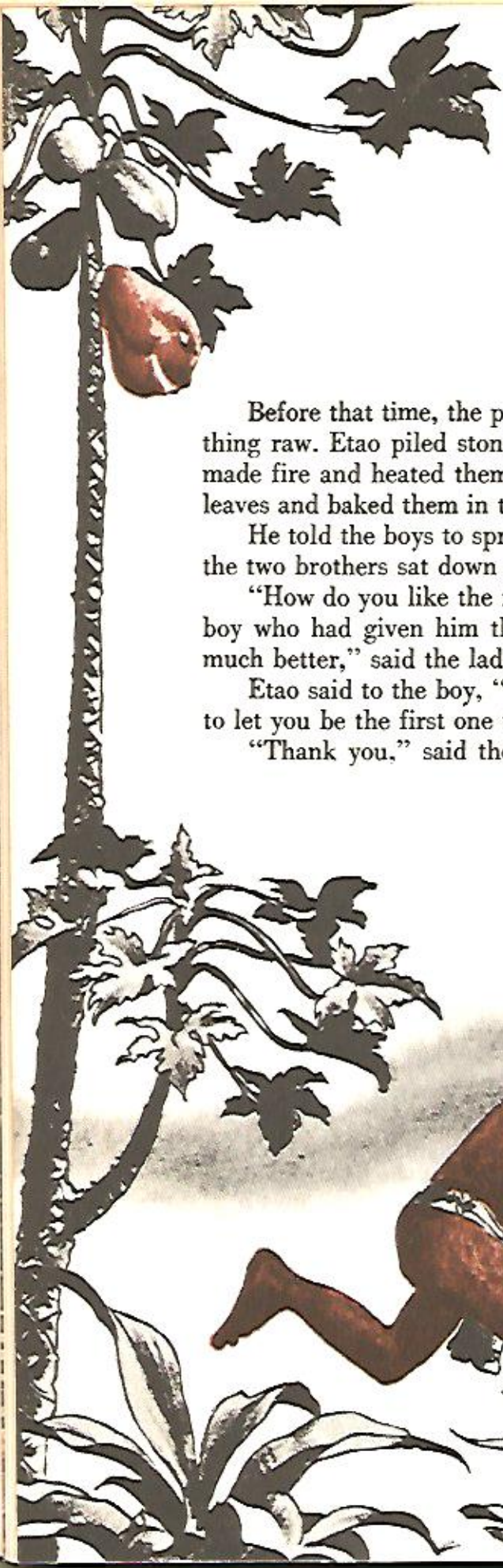
"Very well, then," said Etao to the first man. "You can stand on that rock, where you are."

He changed the man into a *koñe* tree, that grew in the shallow water, among rocks. It was solid and heavy. The man's feet were stuck to a rock. He couldn't move. And so it was with the other fishermen. All became *koñe* trees among the rocks. They stood there a long time, before Etao let them go.

The two brothers walked along the shore. Some young boys were fishing, but had caught no fish.

"Lend me your pole," said Etao to one of the boys, who gave him the pole.

Etao caught many fish, and he shared with the lad. Then he said, "I'll show you something strange and new. I'll show you how to make fire and cook food. You'll be the first one in Likiep Island to learn."



Before that time, the people had no fire, and they ate everything raw. Etao piled stones together into an *um*, or oven, and made fire and heated them. Then he wrapped the fish in green leaves and baked them in the *um*.

He told the boys to spread palm leaves upon the sand. Then the two brothers sat down with the boys and ate

"How do you like the food, cooked or raw?" Etao asked the boy who had given him the pole. "Oh, cooked, of course. It's much better," said the lad.

Etao said to the boy, "You've helped me. So now I'm going to let you be the first one to carry fire to your home."

"Thank you," said the boy.



Etao put dry leaves into the boy's fish basket, piled hot coals upon them, and sent him home. The boy carried the basket home and set it inside the house to show his parents. Suddenly, there were flames and fire that burned up the basket and the whole house.

The boy ran crying back to Etao and said, "You've destroyed everything for me!"

Etao laughed. Then he said, "Nothing is destroyed. Just go and see."

When the boy went home, he found the basket of fire, the house, and everything in it, exactly as it had been before. "Why did Etao fool me?" he said.

He never knew. But from that time, the people in Likiep Island had fire and knew how to cook their food.

