



# LEGENDS OF MICRONESIA

Book Two



MICRONESIAN READER SERIES

# Legends of Micronesia

BOOK TWO

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## Etao's Younger Brother Ben

The mischievous man-god Etao and the wise king Jemeliwut had a younger brother, Ben. He grew so large and strong that people talked about him everywhere. His name was Toletleben, or "big-mountain Ben."

He was proud of his strong body and went around looking for battles. He was the *dritōranae*, the champion, and there were many songs about his deeds.

In those times, the people of the different atolls of the Marshall Islands were often at war with each other over the rights to land. The fighters used spears, daggers, and stone slings. They also used a club that had a long row of the sharp teeth of the giant shark. One stroke of that club could rip an enemy's body open. Ben knew how to use all the weapons well.

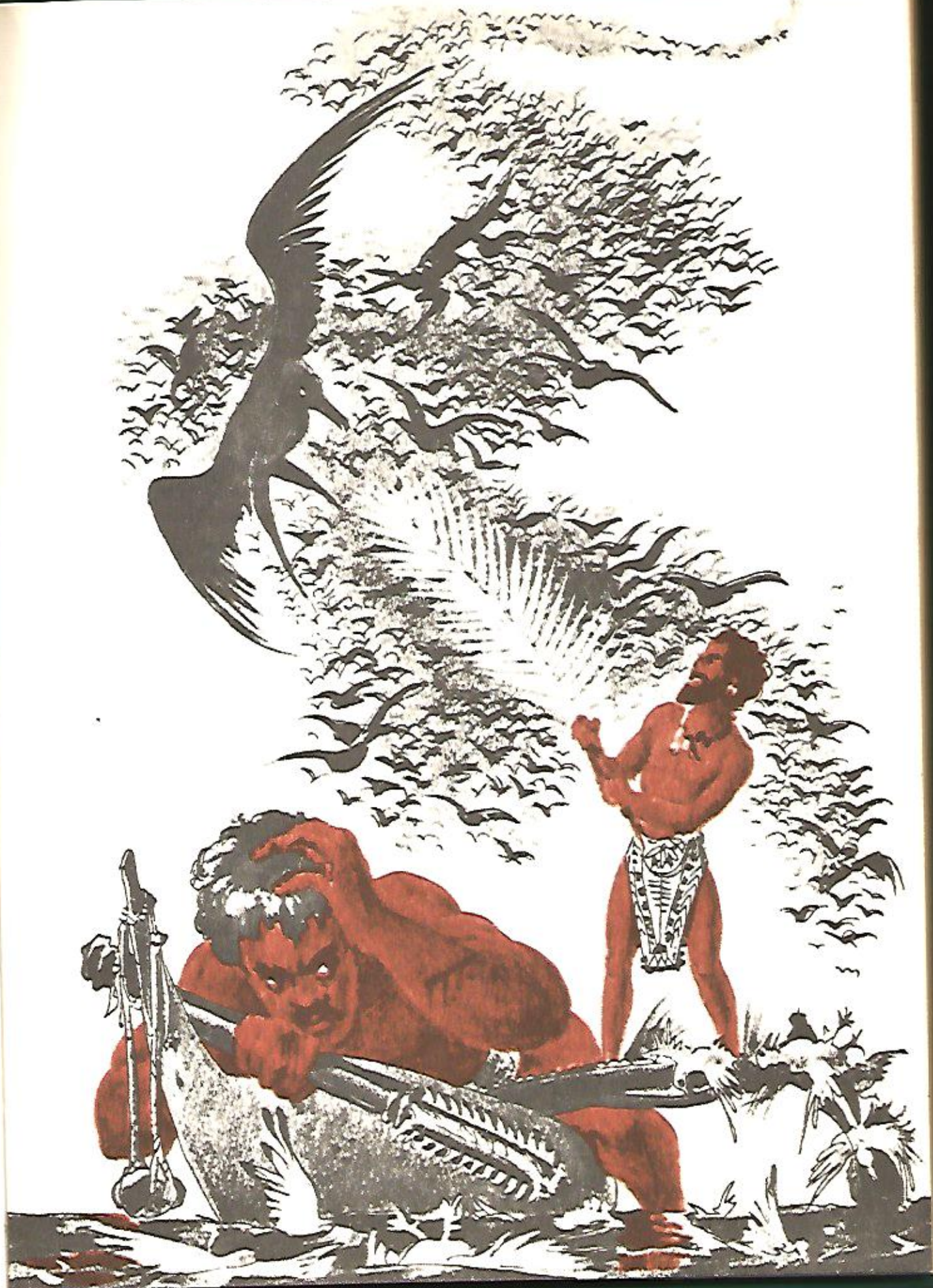
One day, he stood at Kimor, a place in Arno Atoll. He threw stones with his sling, far away, a hundred miles or more, to Aenen, a place in Aur Island. He picked up large rocks and molded them in his strong hands before throwing them. He sang loudly, and his song was something like this:

"I, Ben, the great Champion,  
Standing on the lagoon side of Kimor,  
I throw stones westward, whee-ee-ee!  
Stones and stones and stones,  
Enough to turn Aur upside down.  
I kill!  
There's no retreat when Ben attacks. No retreat!  
Even though thousands line up against me.  
I am Ben, the Champion. I kill!"

The part of Aur where the stones fell was good land then, but it broke to pieces and sank. Many people died. The stones splashed the sea water high into the sky. As they fell, they built up a great reef. After that, when Ben went to fight and take land, men went in canoes to watch him.

People said to Ben's brother, King Jemeliwut of Mejuro Atoll, "You are great, oh king, but your young brother, Toletleben, is even greater. He's so strong that no one can beat







him in anything. It's the greatest thing in the world to have a strong body."

"Do you think so?" said Jemeliwut. "Well, perhaps there are powers that are even stronger. Make a canoe, large enough to hold dozens of men."

The men made the large canoe. Then they sailed over to Aur Island and watched Ben fight. He killed many men and took the island. Then he sailed around and did the same thing in other atolls of the Marshall Islands, first Maloelap, then Wotje, then Ailuk, then Utjerik, and then Mejit. He took them all for his family and clan.

"Why don't you capture Bikar Island too?" asked his brother Jemeliwut.

"That will be easy," said the Champion. "Nobody lives there. I can take it, just by landing there."

They all sailed away to Bikar Island, in the north. It was a place where no people lived. On it were thousands of sea birds.

The other canoes of the fleet stayed beyond the reef. Only his brother, King Jemeliwut, went near the shore with Ben in the great canoe.

Suddenly, a great number of large sea birds flew out and attacked the mighty champion as he stood in the boat. He tried to fight them off. He struck at them with his great club, killing hundreds. Their dead bodies fell all around him in the canoe. Hundreds more came, large and small, and Ben killed them all.

That went on and on. More and more birds attacked him, and he killed more and more. At last, the canoe became so loaded with dead birds that it began to sink.

Still the birds came, in thick clouds that hid the sun. On they came, more and more, and still more and more. The noise of their wings and their cries was like thunder. Ben fought and fought. The birds flew at his head and face and eyes, until he was covered with blood and his eyes began to close.

His friends, watching, felt sorry for him, but they were afraid of the birds and did not go to help him. Finally, Ben called to his brother, Jemeliwut the king, who was under shelter in the canoe.

"Help me, help me, brother!" cried Ben. "The canoe is sinking. I can't get rid of these terrible birds. Come and help me. Save me with your wisdom!"

Jemeliwut came up and stood beside his young brother, who fell down beside him, almost dead. He held up a palm leaf and waved it and spoke to the birds. "Peace, peace!" he said. "I, Jemeliwut, am here. Go away. It is Jemeliwut who speaks."

The birds flew away, like a dark river running to the sky, until all were gone.

Jemeliwut turned to his brother. "Is it possible that you, who can fight so well with weapons, cannot drive away a few birds?" he said. "There are better things than weapons, my brother, for winning battles."

And so the people saw that Jemeliwut was the true *dri anjo*, the leader, the champion. He had the strength of the mind, the heart, and the spirit. He had the magic of peace. It was stronger than the power of club and spear and sling. The people of Mejuro were lucky to have such a king.

The stones which Toletleben threw are still there. They are rounded, like balls, just as Ben molded them, long ago. They lie upon the reef in a row. Anyone can see how well Ben knew the distance and planned the fall of the stones.