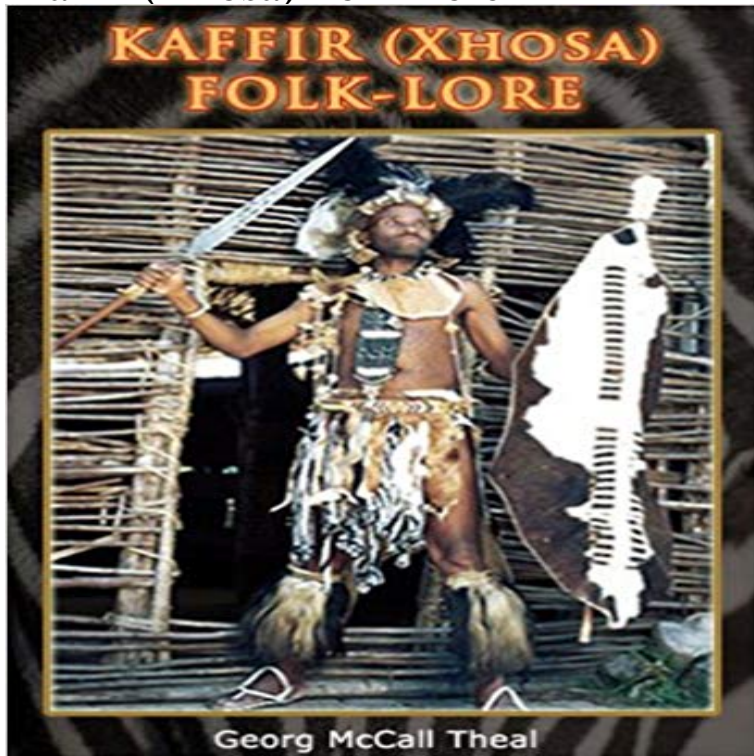


## Kaffir (Xhosa) Folk-Lore



Kaffir (Xhosa) Folk Tales by Georg McCall Theal [A collection of folklore from the Kaffir people of South Africa.] By the 15th century, the word kafir/kuffir was used by Muslims in Africa to refer to the non-Muslim African natives. (Kafir translated means infidel / disbeliever.) Many of those kuffar, were enslaved and sold by their Muslim captors to European and Asian merchants, mainly from Portugal, who by that time had established trading outposts along the coast of West Africa. These European slave traders adopted that Arabic word to refer to their captives, and eventually changed it into many forms: cafre (in Portuguese, Spanish and Greek), caffar, kaffer, kaffir, kafir, etc. (in English, Dutch, and Afrikaans); see South Africa Kaffir people. Those words were then used to name many things related to Africa, such as the Kaffir Wars, Kaffraria, kaffir lime, kaffir corn, and so on... Some of those African slaves were taken by the Portuguese to work in their colonies in Asia. In some cities of Sri Lanka, in particular, the descendants of those slaves still constitute a distinctive ethnic group, who call themselves Kaffir. In South Africa the word kaffir eventually became a racial slur, applied pejoratively or offensively by some whites to African blacks or to dark-skinned persons in general. About the Author: The son of a Canadian physician who wanted him to become an Episcopalian minister, Theal left home early and lived briefly in the United States and Sierra Leone before emigrating to South Africa. There he became a teacher but soon moved to journalism, publishing, and an unsuccessful stint as an amateur diamond miner, all in South African frontier communities. His career as a historian began with the publication of his *Compendium of South African History and Geography* in 1873 following his return to teaching. Theal spent five years at the Lovedale Seminary

outside Alice in the Eastern Cape, working amongst missionaries and Africans. Lovedale was an important institution in the early 1870s, being a non-sectarian and non-denominational theological seminary and Christian school, founded by Presbyterian missionaries in 1841. Lovedales principal, Dr. James Stewart, attached great importance to the teaching of printing and bookbinding. In 1872 Stewart needed someone who could teach and manage the printing works - Theal was the man. He had taught first at an elementary school in Knysna and from 1867 at a public school in King Williams Town, later to become Dale College. He had also been editor of three minor British Kaffrarian newspapers between 1862 and 1865, and later worked for the Kaffrarian Watchman in King Williams Town, where he printed his first contribution South Africa As It Is in 1871. From King Williams Town he had travelled to Du Toits Pan, then seen as the richest diamond mine in the world and was present when Britain raised the Union Jack over the area. Theal wrote some articles for the Diamond News and called the takeover a most disastrous change. Having failed to make his fortune on the diamond fields, he returned to the Eastern Cape. Theal was a religious man, and thus believed that it was the civilised white mans duty to rescue the black man from ignorance and barbarism (in common with others of that period, he saw it in racial terms as well) This made him ready to accept the Lovedale post. While living in King Williams Town, he had read everything available on the history of South Africa and had started on an outline of his own rendition which was a synthesis of all he had read.

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