

[Home](#) > The Cloth That Speaks - KANGA

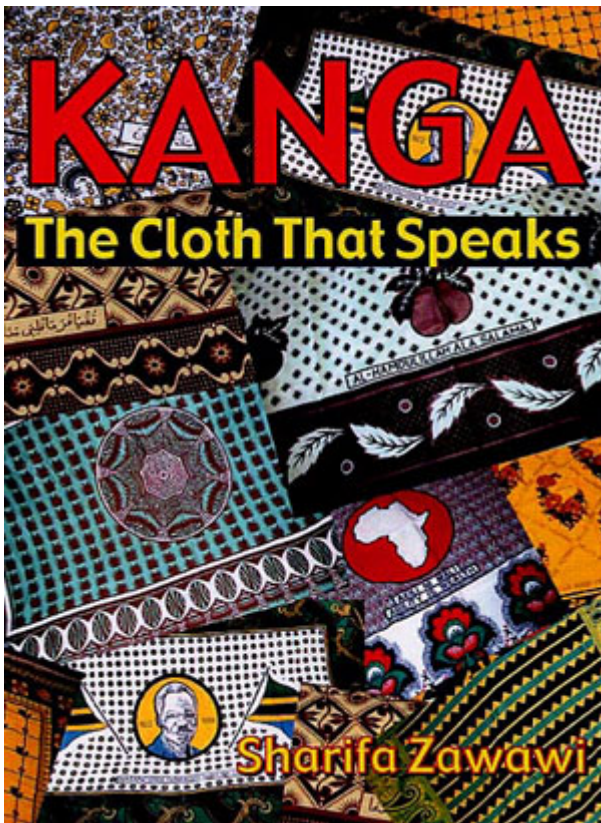
The Cloth That Speaks - KANGA

Professor Sharifa Zawawi has kindly provided users of LangMedia with the following collection of photos of *kangas*. Many photos are accompanied by an English translation of the Swahili saying printed on the cloth. Professor Zawawi writes about the role of the garment known as *kanga* or *leso* in her newly released book *Kanga: The Cloth That Speaks*. The book discusses the history and modern cultural significance of *kangas*. It also includes many colorful photos of *kanga*, an entirely new collection from those presented here. For information on how to purchase the book, contact Azaniya Hills Press, 8 Fordham Hill Oval 15C, The Bronx, N.Y.10468; or e-mail: smzawawi@optonline.net.

Language:

Swahili

From the Book Cover



Photograph of book cover

Kanga The Cloth That Speaks

"The garment known today as *kanga* or *leso* provides a practical, attractive, comfortable form of dress for a tropical climate. It is also an ancient form of communication: it carries a message. The sayings that appear on *kangas* reflect Swahili cultural and human values, material and verbal art; they maintain Swahili literary traditions and enrich them; they present a composite of the historic mercantile connection of items of clothing within the wide context of the Indian Ocean."

"Sharifa Zawawi's search for a better understanding of *kangas* led her to examine the history of the *kanga*, its design, message and significance for Swahili speaking communities within the modern nations of East Africa and the Gulf states of the Arabian Sea. She illustrates and discusses *kangas* and messages from Dar es Salaam, Mombasa, Zanzibar and Muscat."

"Dr. Zawawi takes into account the complexity of *kanga* history and begins to trace anew the development of *kanga* from cloth to clothing. *Kanga* inscriptions provide a documentary representation of Swahili social and political forms of discourse. They express the traditional socio-cultural values of the Swahili community while also reflecting the advent of modernity and change. They are an important source for understanding Swahili ideal behavior and the Swahili value system; their content relates to both women and men, young and old. They instruct at the same time that they provide an outlet for emotions and expectations. They are a window to changing values and cultural and political attitudes. The messages printed on the cloth are permanent -- yet of their time. Culture, history, fashion and language are inextricably interwoven in this study of East African dress."

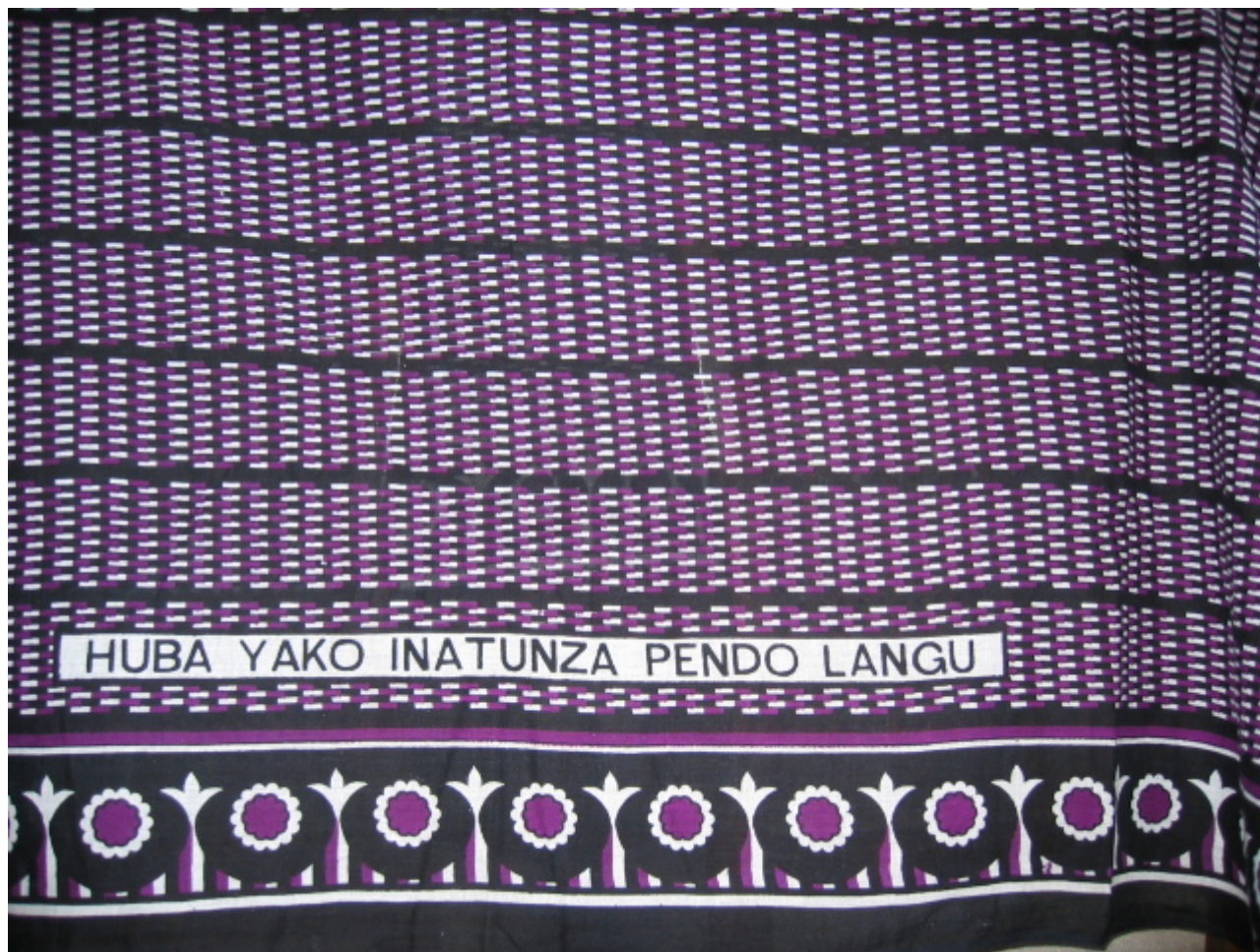
Language:

Swahili

Photos: Page 1



The wrong doer sends you his regrets



Your affection rewards my love



When you give me I receive; I am not a person who steals



When two people are in love an enemy has no chance



Love takes its time

Language:

Swahili

Photos: Page 2



Will overcomes sacrifice



Sorry spiteful one; you will get nothing from me



I have nothing to give you but my blessings (prayers)



I will not eat in the dark for fear of an enemy



Receive this thank you gift even though it is small

Language:
Swahili

Photos: Page 3



Lo mwenzangu mbona shingo
Oh my friend why are you so reluctant?



Nashukuru kwa hili
I thank (you) for this



Mpende ajuaye pendo
Love the person who understands love



Mlidhani nitaumbuka lakini mola kanikumbuka
You thought I will be defaced but God has remembered me



Wewe ndio ufunguo wa moyo wangu
You are the key to my heart

Language:
Swahili

Photos: Page 4



Subira ina malipo
Patience has its reward



Sijasema mwanisema jee nikisema

I have said nothing and you gossip about me. What will happen when I do?



Nakupenda hupendeki

I love you but you are not lovable



Nampenda mpenzi wangu mtasema mtachoka hattoki

I love my beloved. You will talk until you get tired. He/she will not leave me Lo mwenzangu

Language:

Swahili

Photos: Page 5



Mwenye radhi hasumbuki

The blessed one does not suffer



Chuki nichukieni roho yangu niachieni
Hate me but do not deprive me of my soul



Wakelekao shauri zao
Those who are upset it is up to them. They will die before their time



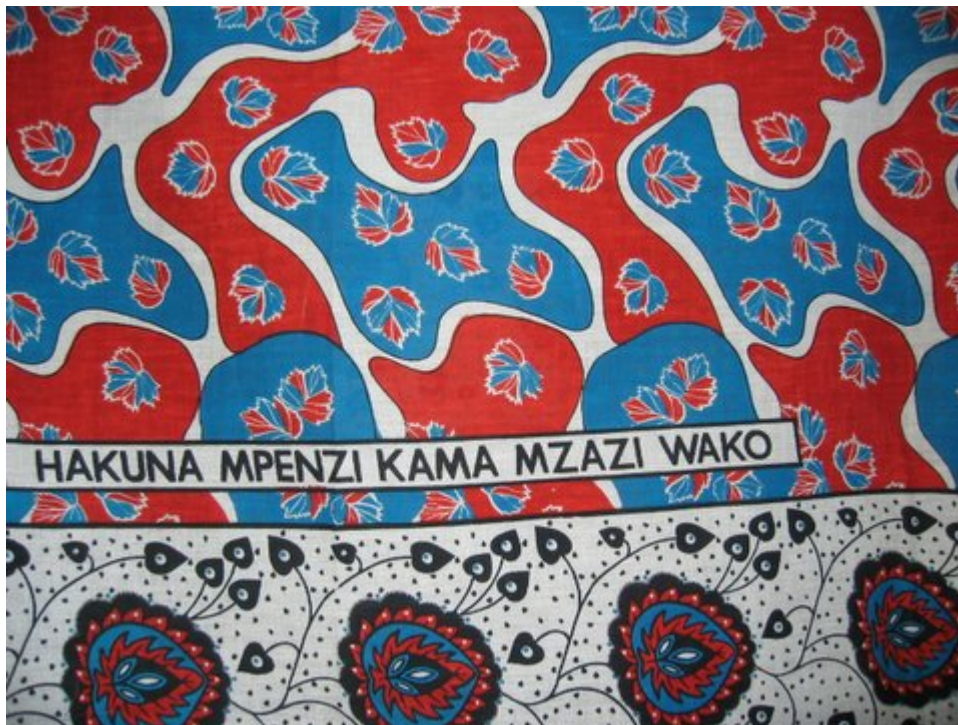
Mungu akupe kila la kheri
May God give you everything that is good



Roho ya mzazi haikosi wasiwasi
A parent's heart is never without worries

Language:
Swahili

Photos: Page 6



Hakuna mpenzi kama mzazi wako
No one loves you more than your parent



Nia yashinda kafara
Intention defeats a sacrifice to avert evil



Jogoo wa shamba haliwiki mjini
The country rooster does not crow in the town



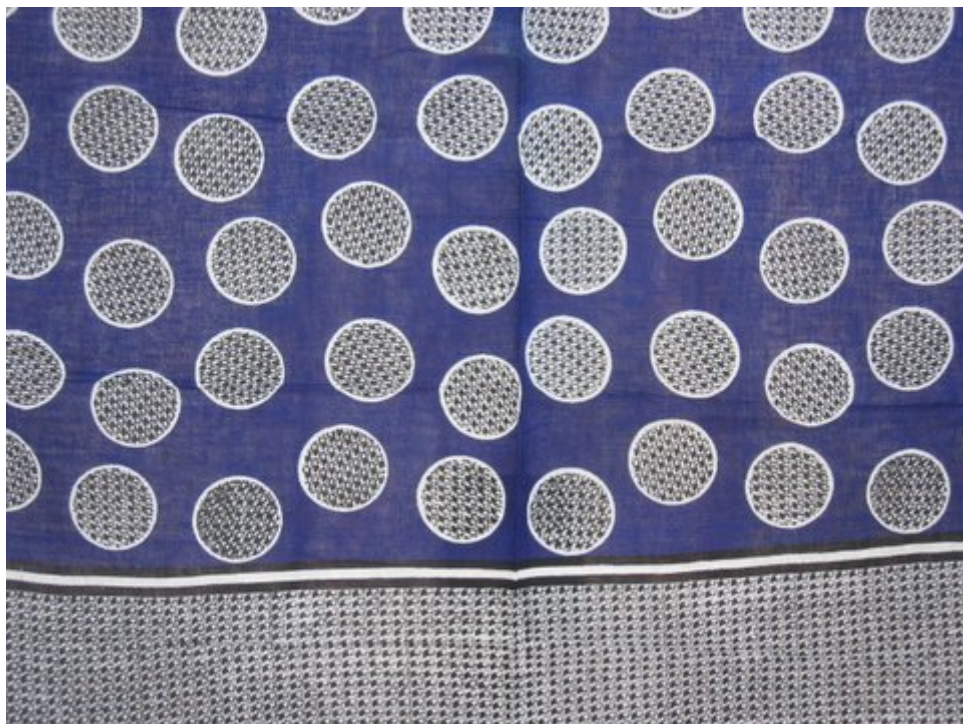
Pole hasidi kwangu hupati kitu
Sorry, envious one. You will get nothing from me



Mimi pera kila nifanyalo lawakera
I am a guava. Whatever I do people are irritated

Language:
Swahili

Photos: Page 7





Language:
Swahili

**View a video of Professor Zawawi speaking
about Kangas**

Video:
Language:
Swahili

About Professor Zawawi

Sharifa Zawawi is a Professor Emeritus of Classical Languages. She has taught Linguistics, Arabic, Swahili and Middle Eastern Languages and Cultures at The City College of the City University of New York (CUNY), Columbia University and the New York University. She has worked as a language consultant and examiner for several universities in the U.S. She is the author of *Kiswahili Kwa Kitendo*, *Say it in Swahili*, *Loan words and their Effect on the Classification of Swahili Nominals*, and *Fast-Track Swahili*. With Africa World Press, she has published *Kiswahili Kwa Kitendo Vol. I* (1980), *Learn our Kiswahili Vol. II*; *Jifunze Kiswahili Chelu* (1993), *Converse in Kiswahili: Ongea* (1991), *What's in a Name? Unaitwaje? A Swahili Book of Names* (1993) and *African Muslim Names: Images and Identities* (1998).

Five College Center for World Languages

79 South Pleasant St, Suite 100

Amherst College, AC Box 2264

Amherst, MA 01002

USA

[FCCWL website](#)

p: 413-542-5264

e: fclang@fivecolleges.edu



© Five Colleges, Incorporated

[Staff login](#)
