Professor Sharifa Zawawi has kindly provided users of LangMedia with the following collection of photos of k mangas. 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 kanga. 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 Azania 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
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
View a video of Professor Zawawi speaking about Kangas
About Professor Zawawi