101 uses of kargas: fashionable, functional, or fanciful.

WARNING
Follow the instructions carefully!

KANGAS: 101 USES
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DEDICATION:

We dedicate this book to Nani and the fauna and flora of the Croze nest.

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The Kanga

THE KANGA is a rectangle of pure cotton cloth with a border all around it, printed in bold designs and bright colours. It is as long as the span of your outstretched arms and wide enough to cover you from neck to knee, or from breast to toe. Kangas are usually bought and worn as a pair - called a "doti". Kangas are the perfect gift. Husbands give kangas to wives, children to their mothers, a woman may split a pair to give half to her best friend. Men can sleep in kangas, and often wear them around the house; women wear them everywhere; babies are virtually born into them, and are usually carried in a soft sling of kanga cloth. Kangas are extremely popular throughout East Africa not only for clothing but for their multiple uses; no-one can ever have too many!

THE KIKOI is a more variable rectangle of cotton cloth, usually with fringed ends and a simple woven (not printed) pattern without the full border patterning of the kanga. A classic kikoi is made from two long handwoven strips of cloth, handstitched together to form a long, wide piece. Kikois are the traditional wrap-around worn by men along the East African coast. Many of the styles and uses shown in this book apply to the kikoi as well as the kanga.

KITENGE is a heavier or more densely woven cotton cloth, without the rectangular pattern units of kanga cloth. Kitenge patterns may have a continuous border along the edges of the roll, but usually not across the grain as the kanga always does. Kitenge is used to make dresses, shirts, curtains, etc. If cut in Kanga length pieces, kitenge can be used as shown in this book, but being heavier, it is harder to tie or knot and falls off much more easily. Also, the lack of a full border makes many styles look incomplete.

In this booklet we show you 101 ways of wearing or using kangas. About half of these are styles of clothing, and the other half range from functional to the fanciful! We hope that we can tempt you to invent your own styles and uses for these most pleasant and colourful pieces of cloth.
Kangas originated on the coast of East Africa in the mid-19th century. As the story goes, some stylish ladies on the islands of Zanzibar or Mombasa got the idea of buying printed kerchiefs in lengths of six. The pieces were cut from the bolt of cotton cloth from which kerchiefs were usually cut off and sold singly. They then cut the six into two lengths of three, and sewed these together along one side to make a 3-by-2 sheet. They probably bought different kinds of kerchiefs and sewed them back together to form very individualistic designs.

The new style was called "LESO" after the kerchief squares that had originally been brought to Africa by Portuguese traders. The term is still in use. The leso quickly became more popular than the other kinds of patterned cloth available. Before long, enterprising coastal shopkeepers sent away for special designs, printed like the six-together leso pieces, but as a single unit of cloth.

These early designs probably had a border and a pattern of white spots on a dark background, like the kerchiefs still popular all over the world today. The East African buyers (or maybe their menfolk?) quickly came to call these cloths "KANGA" after the noisy, sociable guinea-fowl with its elegant spotty plumage.

Kanga designs have evolved over the years, from simple spots and borders to a huge variety of elaborate patterns of every conceivable motif and colour. For a century, kagias were mostly designed and printed in India, the Far East and Europe. Even today, you will see kagias that were printed in China or India. But since the 1950's, more and more kagias have been designed and printed in Tanzania, Kenya and other countries of Africa.
Early this century, Swahili sayings were added to kantas. Supposedly this fashion was started by a locally famous trader in Mombasa, Kaderdina Hajee Essak, also known as "Abdulla". His many kanga designs, formerly distinguished by the mark "K.H.E. - Mali ya Abdulla", often included a proverb. At first, the sayings, aphorisms or slogans were printed in Arabic script, later in Roman letters. Many of them have the added charm (or frustration!) of being obscure or ambiguous in their meaning. If you find a motto that you can’t figure out, ask several different Swahili speakers. You will get an equal number of different explanations! Some typical kanga sayings are listed on the following page, for your edification and enjoyment.

New kanga designs keep appearing in great variety: - simple or intricate abstract patterns; homely themes such as chickens, crops, babies and fertility; pictures of famous attractions like mountains, monuments and wildlife; even pop stars! There are noticeable regional differences. For example, most of the kantas with mottos are made in Kenya, while those commemorating social or political events are more common in Tanzania.

The Kanga is still evolving. Like the T-shirt, but incomparably more elegant and useful, it is a valuable medium for personal political, social and religious expression. As an art form as well as a beautiful, convenient garment, the kanga has become an integral part of East African culture. As the saying goes, "The kanga struts in style..."
Wear it with a smile!
KANGA SAYINGS

USINISUMBUE   ADUI MPENDE
-Don't bother me!- -Love your enemy-

AKILI NI MALI NJIA MWONGO FUPI
-Wits are wealth- -The way of the liar is short-

VIDOLE VITANO - KIPI NI BORA?
Of five fingers, which is best?

RADHI NI BORA KULIKO MALI
(A kanga with this inscription was stolen from the author by a wild chimpanzee in the Gombe National Park. It was shredded, sucked, and dropped bit by bit into a nest of safari ants. The motto seemed appropriate:)

"Blessings are better than possessions"

MTAKA YOTE HUKOSA YOTE
-One who wants all, usually loses all-

KUPATA SI KWA WEREVU, NA KUKOSA SI UJINGA
Getting is not cleverness, lacking is not stupidity

KULEYA MIMBA SI KAZI : KAZI NI KULEYA MWANA
GETTING PREGNANT ISN'T WORK! THE WORK IS TO RAISE THE CHILD!

KULEKEZA SI KUFUMA
To aim is not to hit.

NDOVU WAWILI WAKISONGANA, ZIUMIAZO NI NYIKA
When two elephants jostle, what gets hurt is the grass.

KANGA NENDA NA UREMBO, SHANI UREMBO NA SHANI
The kanga struts in style—surprisingly stylish and smart.
Let us introduce our two kanga "models" - Rehema and Celestiana. Celestiana is the aspiring fashion model, tall and elegant. Rehema is more down-to-earth, short and sturdy. We intended that they could illustrate which clothing styles look best on which figure. But Rehema and Celestiana gradually took over from us and developed personalities of their own!

In the first half of this book, they show you how to wear kantas. The second half is about other uses. There are three basic principles for all uses:

1. ORIENTATION: Rehema and Celestiana are here shown holding a side of a kanga. For some styles, you start by holding an end. The correct orientation is shown in the first drawing of each sequence, and you are also shown how to fold or roll the kanga.

2. ADJUSTMENTS: The arrowed stages in each sequence of drawings should lead to a functional outfit. But take the time to knot, fold, gather, pleat or tuck the kanga as necessary. This will ensure that they won't fall off, and lets you display the kanga's pattern (or contents) in the most pleasing way.

3. SIMPLICITY: All the styles and uses require only one or two intact kantas. Apart from hemming they are not sewn, cut, buttoned, zipped or otherwise mutilated. Sometimes a pin is useful for extra security, but the challenge or the reward of using kantas is to keep them simple and perfect.

As such, kantas are the easiest clothes to care for. Just wash them, then rinse thoroughly (to protect colours, and your skin) and hang up wet. They will dry in a very short time.
Some of the clothing styles may not suit you; it depends on your taste as well as your size and shape. Try them all; tall or short, young or old, fat or thin, you're sure to find some styles which really look and feel GOOD!
1. Traditional Dress

Step 1.
The simplest style of all. Just follow the arrows from step to step...

Step 2.

N.B: Note our terminology:
"END"
"SIDE"
"CORNER"

Step 3.
Tuck
Pull Eight

Step 4.

EASY?

Variations
a) Side Tuck - the style shown above
b) Side Tuck with corner out
(c) Center Tuck

(Most secure style)
2. Traditional Skirt

Often worn over short dresses or mini-skirts (which are considered to be indecent in some countries, e.g. Tanzania)
Leave corner out for security and for use as "pocket" (see next page).

3. Traditional "Pocket"

The corners of the kanga can be used as "pockets" to enfold or tie onto all sorts of necessities: money, medicines, food, comb, etc. Place precious items in end, tie in knot, then tuck inside skirt (A). Outside end is more accessible, leave "pocket" to dangle (B) or roll into waistband.
4. Traditional Shawl I - shoulders

Shawl A.
There are, of course, variations on the shawl:

Shawl B.
Fold kanga corner-to-corner as shown, drape loosely or tie in knot.

Looks especially neat from the back and has long ends for tying nicely in front. Free ends of shawls make good "pockets" too.
5. Traditional Shawl II - head

Celestiana in (2) & (4A); Rehema in (2) & (5)
6. Traditional Dance Costume

One of many variants. This uses 3 pieces: top as in style (35), skirt style (2) gathered at waist, third kanga as belt to hold skirt on.

7. Traditional Headpiece

Diagonal fold and roll

Lay it over back of head

Tuck in loose flaps & bind ends firmly round head

Finally knot ends across front. Variant: try this style back-to-front.
8. Belts, Folds and Knots, or - How to stop them falling off!

To use kanga's properly, you will need to be able both to adjust and to secure them. The traditional styles shown so far depend mainly on simple tucks and ties, but there are other ways of ensuring a good and secure fit. One example can be seen in the dance costume (6), where an extra kanga is used as a belt. The loose swinging "tail" is not only eye-catching, but useful!

Opposite are illustrated some basic folds and ties that have multiple uses for both fitting and securing your kanga's:

1. Pleating - good for adjusting length and neatly reducing bulges of cloth.
2. Diagonal fold - basic for traditional headpiece, shawls and belts.
3. Inward diagonal fold - the longest, neatest fold for belts, sashes, scarves and rope-like uses.
4. Simple roll (not shown) - roll diagonally from corner to corner. Good for ropes, ties etc.
5. Simple tie - over then under.
6. Square or reef knot - neat and very strong. Can be used to join two ends of the same kanga, or of two different kanga's.
7. Slip knot - one end pulls through the knot formed by the other end, so you can tighten or loosen the kanga. Very good for adjustments, not as bulky as the more secure square knot.
9. Neck Knot Dress
An everyday, durable dress for small or short people.

10. Neck Knot Dress and Overskirt
Tall people can add a skirt (style 2) to make this two-piece dress.
11. Neck Knot Dress and Shift
12. Neck Knot Dress and Skirt

13. Side Tie Shift
14. Side Tie Skirt
15. **Shoulder Knot Basic Dress**
16. **Basic Dress and Overskirt**

A basic dress for all occasions:

Tie tip of kanga end to side with square knot over both shoulders. Cross in front and wear belt for short dress (15) or add a matching kanga for long dress (16). Leave loose for sleeveless "jacket" or cape.

17. **Single Shoulder-Knot Belted Dress**
18. **Double Shoulder-Knot Dress**

17. Single kanga with a belt.

18. Two kanga, worn loose or with a belt.
19. Criss-cross dress - Front knot (for small people)

20. Same, with shoulder knot
Use a pin to ensure knot doesn't slip off shoulder

"TAKE AN END" - Lengthwise styles 21-34

Adjust length by folding or pleating top end of kanga.
21. Backless Dress - Knot or belt

Also makes excellent full length apron.

Fasten with knot (thin people) or belt (anyone)

22. Backless Dress and Cape
Add second kanga for cape.
23. Long Dress I

Breast knot

24. Long Dress II
Behind-neck knot

25. Elegant Dress
TOGAS

26. Toga I

27. Toga II

Two kinds of shoulder ties:
1. Square knot
2. Slip knot

With knot or clasp

With belt

28. Toga III
Knot one kanga over each shoulder. A good style for taller people.

Wear like this, or with belt.
This style, and the next, need careful tucking in order to work.
31. Sun/swimsuit III - backless
Knot
Tuck in as desired.

32. Same, with skirt

33. Panty-skirt/loincloth

Also can be worn back-to-front.
34. Brief bottom

Start with loincloth (33) with long apron, tuck this behind.

35. Back Knot

Secure with square knot in back.

36. Same, but knotted in front.

As above, but with a twist.

As above, but with ends twisted and knotted behind neck.
37. Halter I - Back cross

With this style most women can't tie all four corners together in front.

38. Halter II - Uncrossed

Variant: tie all four corners in front, tuck in loose folds.
39. Halter III - Front cross

Start with kanga diagonally folded or rolled.

Adjust.

40. Neck Knot Halter

Simple tie in front.
41. Bra I - Shoulder Knot

Fold kanga in half diagonally, roll tightly starting at fold:

42. Bra II - Neck Knot
43. Headscarf (knotted tail)

44. Turban I - Back twist

45. Turban II - Front twist
Same as above, but reversed.
"YOU FIGURE IT OUT!

50. Elegant Caper

49. Coat and Skirt

51. Kimono Dress

52. Athena
53. "Empire" sundress

54. Jumpsuit

Hints for "You Figure It Out" styles

49: Easy - skirt style 2, top as shown. Wear it over a bikini/blouse/sweater.

50: Similar to Elegant Ensemble 25, but pull top corners of cape forwards and down over shoulders, under arms, and knot behind back.

51: (i) Start with cape as above. Pick up bottom corners and knot them behind neck. Arrange front folds to suit. To hold them in place:
(ii) Tie second kanga as in skirt style 2 with centre tuck, tightly around hanging folds of 1st kanga.

52: (i) Knot behind neck.
(ii) Wrap kanga 1 as shown. Hold corner "A" in teeth!
(iii) Wrap kanga 2 as shown.
(iv) Knot corners "Aa" at base of throat and adjust.
53: (i) Start with shift style 1, with centre tuck.  
(ii) Then make the top as follows:  
Twist corners.  
Simple tie in front; knot behind neck.

A comfortable style for pregnancy.

Gather remaining loose material at back, twist it all into a single "pony tail" and secure with a knot.

54: These clues show how it's done. The only tricky bit is knotting the edges together at "x" behind back. Success depends mainly on adjustment. Best for small people.  
Knotted behind  
Knot or use pin.

Looks best with kangas that have no bold central design - unlike our drawing!

55. Traditional Baby Carrier
56. Diapers

57. Nursing Tent

58. Sling for Weighing and Carrying
65. Birdcage Cover

66. Gag
67. Head-pad for heavy loads

68. "Wind-screen?"
74. Fruit collector
75. Swing

76. Bird-watching hide
77. Bird catcher
89. To distract pursuing Beasts

90. Distress Signal
101. Gift Wrap

IT'S A GOODBYE GIFT FOR DEAR LITTLE REHEMA!

I'VE BROUGHT YOU A.... REHEMA!! WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!! WE'RE NOT SUPPOSED TO SEE KANGAS IN THIS BOOK!!

YES I KNOW, BUT IF YOU DO.....
..."THE SKY'S THE LIMIT!"

Draw your own ideas here!