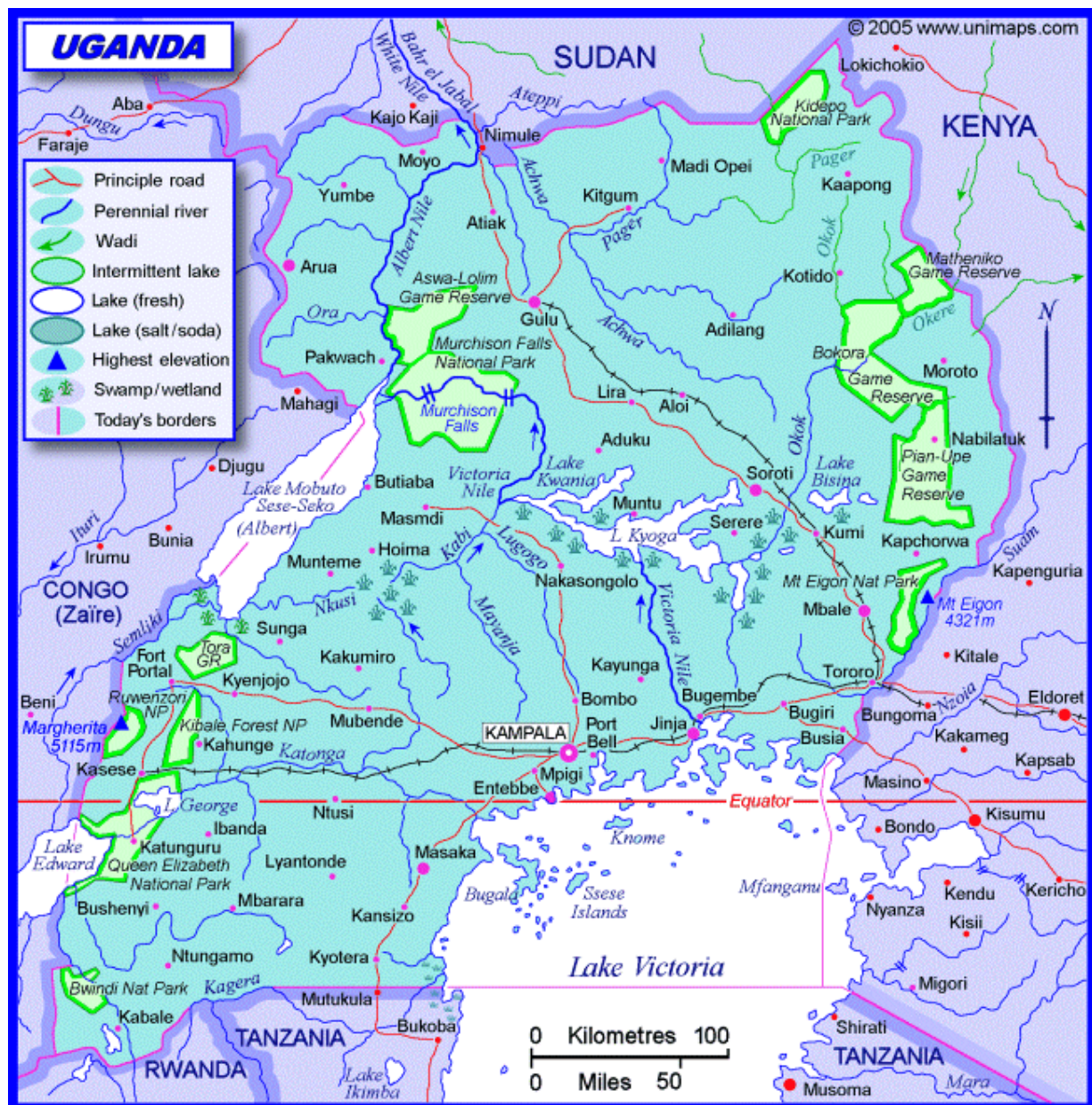


Hi Martina,

Bwola dance is one of the originally performed Royal dances of Uganda, performed at the installation of a chief or king or other. As you might know in 1967, Uganda became a full scale republic and kingdoms were abolished. Then changes happened, the foods, music and other reserved goodies for the palace were let loose to the commoner public.

This was the case when we went to Gulu - Northern Uganda. One of the most fascinating things was the Acholi peoples' wedding. It was not part of the Senator festival that we had gone to host as organizers.



About 300 meters from the hotel where we stayed was the Catholic church. We had travelled from Kampala about 400 Miles by a hired car with Victoria (my wife), Irene (My sister) and myself, so we could control the driver's speed and be able to stop along the way whenever we wanted. It was our first time to go to Gulu - a region for wars that have left many dead, without legs, arms, eyes etc. Generally people have been miserable and all people less than 28 years have never seen peace because of the Lord's Resistance Armed rebellion led by Joseph Kony.

The many stop overs made the journey more tiresome and we got to Gulu after 12.00a.m. now 28th December 2007 yet we intended to get there on 27th.

The following morning we could not get up early really. But, I kept on hearing singers and women ululating probably by 7.00a.m.

Then we woke up round about 10.00a.m., had breakfast and before we could finish, the noises increased and the waitress wondered when we were going to join the wedding. She thought that was why we were in Gulu.

So we all moved very fast, feeling a bit fresh after a bath each. We found Bwola dancers lined up on both sides of the road, literally blocking any one from passing except pedestrians. Of course they kept on squeezing through the noisy crowd.



They kept on changing songs and dancing lightly, reserving the energy for the most important moment - when the bridal entourage appeared.



Then came the bridal cars and the excitement hyped - young and old alike. They formed two lines and the cars went through the middle all the way to the church that was now about 100 meters away.



I was very careful not to be pushed by the running crowd so I missed picking many important moments in the crowd.



Then the bride got out of the car and joined the waiting husband and they walked straight to the front of the church, where a white Rev. Fr. was waiting.

Behind them were women who had brooms, knives and other stuff like libations following and sprinkling some of these in the crowd turned congregation.

It was a unique wedding where I saw a convenient marriage of practices - Acholi traditional / Catholic formal ceremony.



Near me stood one of the dancers called Benon Kidega from Paboo sub county in Pader District. He is a member of Agago Bwola dancers. Agago Bwola dancers perform at many functions. He told me that Bwola can now be performed for children, at marriage and other events. They got feathers for making the mens' headgears from South Africa because ostriches are no longer found.



He further said, that this mix of practices is to confirm the fact that the people wedding are Acholi who are Catholic Christians.

He actually said it is common to have such occurrences and they cannot run away from the fact that they have a culture which must be seen even at a church wedding. They have to maintain their culture.



After that I saw a truck on to which passengers were boarding. Eh! You will see one of the cows, I guess about to die before take off. I stood there to wait and see how they finally leave. Somehow I think they managed to reach their destination. It was amazing.

