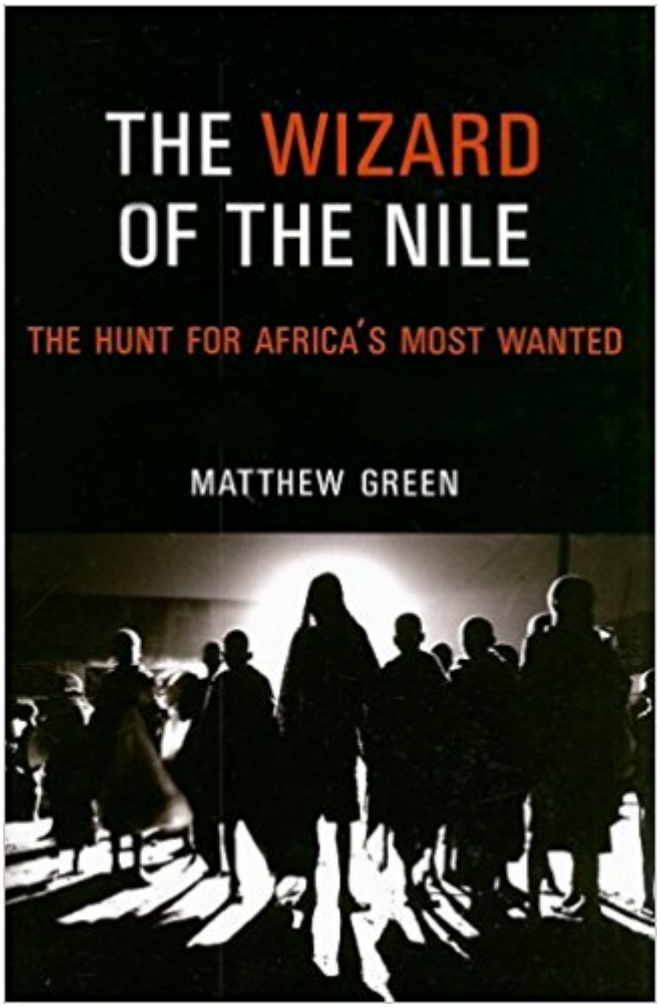
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The Wizard Of The Nile: The Hunt For Africa's Most Wanted



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Synopsis

The civil war in Uganda has bled on for over two decades, spilling over into Sudan and the Congo and drawing only occasional interest from the West. The rebel insurgency in the north is led by "the wizard of the Nile," Joseph Kony, whose Lord's Resistance Army is infamous both for its wish to rule Uganda according to the Ten Commandments and its unrelenting brutality. Matthew Green journeys up the White Nile in order to answer what seemed at first a simple question: "How could one maniac leading an army of abducted children hold half a country hostage for twenty years?" His quest is complicated not only by his plunge into a war zone to find the notoriously elusive Kony, but because the conflict itself continues to resist his, and our, attempts to understand it. He meets the victims maimed and raped by Kony's soldiers; the soldiers themselves, who were first children, victims of abduction; and the political leaders who have their own reasons for preferring war to peace.

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Customer Reviews

"Splendidly spun... A fine, brave book... illuminates a rarely understood part of the world."

Matthew Green speaks fluent Swahili, studied African politics at university, and has spent four years on the ground in East Africa as a reporter for Reuters. He is now the West Africa correspondent for the Financial Times. This is his first book.

Very interesting first person look at the ongoing conflict in Uganda, which has also influenced Sudan and the Congo. Explains a little about Joseph Kony, who is responsible for so many kidnappings,

mutilations and murders. It is very readable and engaging.

If there is a religiously-inspired, insane, murderous fugitive leading a band of rebels hiding in the African jungle, what is the best thing to do? Why, interview him. That was the answer of Matthew Green, a young British journalist covering East Africa for Reuters. All that had to be done was to find Joseph Kony, the warlord of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) whose fanatical Christian militia had terrorized northern Uganda for over two decades and who is recognized as being among the world's worst of bad guys. Find him, and get the answer to the one simple question: "How could one maniac leading an army of abducted children hold half a country hostage for twenty years?" Getting the answer is not so simple, nor is finding Kony, but the outcome of Green's 2006 quest to find him and Green's attempt to understand an answer to the question are contained in his _The Wizard of the Nile: The Hunt for Africa's Most Wanted_ (Portobello Books). Suffice it to say that Green's history of the region and of Kony's movement does not fully explain the monstrosities the LRA has perpetrated, and he doesn't get the answers he wanted, but Green details how he was doing his job as a reporter, letting us know about the many frustrations therein and the broader explanations he obtained. There is journalistic bravado and curiosity on display here, but with self-deprecating humor, making this an enjoyably readable memoir and travelogue with dark themes.The warlord was born a peasant to a witchcraft faith-healer within the Acholi, a tribe living in northern Uganda near the border with Sudan. They had been the victims of revenge killing and cattle theft by the Ugandan government, and were in the market for a messiah. Kony had gone to primary school (wearing his rosary) but was distracted by the spirit world which forced him to become a witchdoctor. He was successful at the trade, and even more so when a new spirit infested him; he explained that the Holy Spirit had come so he could fight the Ugandan government and he would make the Ten Commandments law. Ten Commandments or not, for three years the International Criminal Court has had out an arrest warrant for the warlord, charged with crimes against humanity. Kony had made the conflict descend into a bizarre hall-of-mirrors nightmare. Green writes, "It was a conflict in which the people who chopped off people's noses were also victims, having been abducted and forced to kill in Kony's name. It was a conflict in which people would give food to the very rebels who could wipe out their whole village, hoping it would help their lost sons and daughters to survive." What is remarkable about Green's book, though, is that although he concentrates on his own efforts to get to see and interview the monster, he also comes to the realization that the concentration of the western media upon Kony is a simplistic one-dimensional analysis.It has to be said that Green does not make all this clear, but he has done an excellent job

of describing the distressing and hellish conflict and its history. It wouldn't be fair to say whether he got that interview or not, but by the end of the book he has helped us realize it isn't very important, because the importance of Kony is overshadowed by how he is being used by others. "... as long as the conflict was portrayed as the result of one man's seemingly inexplicable `evil', there was no need for people to look any deeper." This remarkable book, a journalist's memoir not so much of "How I Got That Story" but more a look at a haunted land and a broader view of the history of its conflict, is the sort of deeper look that is needed.

For more than 20 years now, the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) has been waging war against innocent civilians in Northern Uganda and surrounding countries, pillaging, torturing, dismembering and murdering adults, and kidnapping children to brutalise, brainwash and use as recruits. Journalist Matthew Green set out to find and interview the LRA's leader Joseph Kony, and this book tells the story of his journey.Kony claims to be representing the Acholi people of Northern Uganda in a war to overthrow President Museveni's government and install a government "based on the Ten Commandments". He does not seem to realise that his actions are diametrically opposed to every one of the Ten Commandments: 1. No other God and 2. No idols - Kony is a practising spirit medium; 3. Misusing God's name - Kony frequently purports to speak for God; 4. Sabbath Day - The LRA conducts raids on Sundays; 5. Honour parents - the LRA kidnaps children then forces them to kill their families; 6. No murder - Kony does plenty of that; 7. No adultery - Kony has 80 wives; 8. No stealing - the LRA constantly steals; 9. No lying - Kony engages in consistent deception; 10. No coveting - Kony is always coveting the possessions and positions of others.The story of the LRA has not been well documented, and Green's book helps to remedy that. The writing is engaging, and the subject matter very interesting. However, the author's quest to meet Joseph Kony is ultimately more of a celebrity chase than a search to find the answer to any serious question. If and when Kony's war is finally ended, the trauma that he has caused will last for decades.

"The Wizard of the Nile: The Hunt for Africa's Most Wanted" is a look at the fighting force of the LRS, the Lord's Resistance Army, a force that is notorious for battling the Ugandan government for decades on end in order to bring the country under their control, in the name of Christianity. Most American Christians would condemn their tactics as un-Christian - such as employing child soldiers. With a special focus on the LRS's leader, Jospeh Kony, "The Wizard of the Nile" is a heartily recommended read for any who want to understand Uganda's conflict.

This book is OK as a bit of travel adventure and human interest story but it should not be regarded as an explanation of the Lords Resistance Army or an analysis of Kony, the organization or its agenda or psychology. In fact, there is little content relating to any of that. Instead, the author seems preoccupied with his own quest to see Kony and with extricating himself from some bungled attempts to do so. However, Green's writing style is not bad and the book is easy to read but if you want to gain serious understanding of the LRA, I would not recommend this book.

Books and essays written by Sverker FinnstrÃƒÂ¶m and Tim Allen are better places to start reading about the LRA and Uganda. Their work imparts an understanding of the conflict rather than an impression of the author's ego.

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